

than in the *QUEST*—suffices certain religious minds as keeping for them, after all, a real Founder, a Jesus who did foresee his Church, and who therefore can be fitly worshipped, whatever may happen to the creed of Virgin Birth and Miracles and Resurrection. In a fashion sufficiently different from Strauss's, Schweitzer has ostensibly salved the dogma of Divine Sacrifice for at least some ecclesiastical purposes, and a Judas to boot!

It will probably not interfere with the limited success open to such a performance that Dr. Schweitzer has made out his case as inexpensively as he proved that Judas must have done something quite different from what the gospels say he did. The gospels are for the theorist a mass of texts yielding no totality of historical sense, but capable of supplying a selection that, with sufficiently imaginative treatment, will bear at least one theory. The rival theorist Wrede, Professor at Breslau (now deceased), had powerfully argued that the Messianic element in the gospels is *post mortem*; that Jesus was simply a Moral Teacher or Preacher, an earnest Reformer who had not regarded himself as a Messiah; and that the Messianic Jesus cult was set up only after his death, with the story of his resurrection. Schweitzer on the other hand sees in Jesus, primarily, a believer in the speedy end of the world, who preaches an "interim ethic," and who *must* have told his disciples he was the Messiah, because otherwise his disciples could never have had the idea of making him one.

Irreverent analogies suggest themselves; but we need not apply them. The Christians who cannot assimilate the orthodox system will doubtless choose, according to their temperaments, between the Teacher who delivered the Sermon on the

Mount, miraculously preserved by illiterates without the aid of reporters, and the Jesus who, knowing the end of the world to be near, supplied only an "interim ethic" pending the materialization of the Kingdom of God, in which he was to appear as the slain and resurrected Messiah.

The open-minded reader will perceive that these rival constructions from the gospel material, each ignoring the bulk of the other's case, are the work of energetic self-willed students applying, as Arnold would say, the German plan of expounding a theory with "vigour and rigour" at whatever cost to the data. The English reader can find an interesting example of the type and the process in the work of the late Mr. Clutton-Brock on 'Shakespeare's Hamlet,' wherein is presented an intuitively conceived Hamlet who is "expressed" and yet "not expressed" in the text; who suffers from an "Unconscious" that takes charge of his consciousness; and who dies leaving Horatio to communicate Freudian facts which the dramatist does *not* communicate.

Arnold, in his turn, had visualized the gospel Jesus with just the same amiable arbitrariness, in his own fashion. All the criticism of the Fourth Gospel as unhistorical he puffed aside in his most pontifical manner. He felt that he knew better. For him, certain texts exhibit Jesus, not of course as a God, but as the incarnation of "sweet reasonableness." All the many texts which do *not* do this, accordingly, are placidly left out of account, or saddled on the disciples, who, poor men, did not understand what was said to them, though it must have been through them that whatever Jesus did say had been preserved, if there was any truth in the total story.

It is this perpetual play of subjective caprice in the face of a great historical problem that has impelled open-minded students to face it faithfully in the spirit of historical science, treating the documents as honest historians try to treat all documents, seeking loyally to find real historical matter if any there be, and prepared to confess where it is lacking.

It should be noted at this point, however, that the phrase, "Treat the Bible like any other book," which is sometimes used in this connection, is apt to be misleading. The historical problem involved stands by itself;<sup>1</sup> for there is no parallel in historiography (save in the Old Testament) to such a set of documents as the gospels, demonstrably a stratification of accretions, made with varying "tendential" purposes. To prove that Lycurgus is a non-historical figure, as has been done by modern scholars, is a comparatively simple matter, calling only for recognition of certain plain discrepancies in the records, and, at the same time, of the normal proclivity of all ancient history-builders to posit a pre-eminent Founder for any State or institution. But to grasp the problem of the founding of Christianity there is needed a broad survey of the subject-matter of what may be termed the "human" sciences, which are often only slightly known to the documentary scholars who deal with the New Testament.

These sciences are: (1) Anthropology, as it is conceived in England: that is, in sum, the knowledge of the whole cultural life, including the

<sup>1</sup> I am told by Dr. Edward Greenly that the Maha-pari-nibbana Sutta, unique in this respect among the Buddhist Pittakas, is a patently composite document. It tells of the last days of the Blessed One.

religious ideas and practices, of savages or "primitives" and barbarians; (2) Mythology, as surveyed and collected by the specialists in that department; and (3) Hierology, or the science of the growth, construction, and evolution of Religions in general—the field which is still commonly described by the clumsy and ungrammatical name of Comparative Religion. These essentially modern sciences are as a rule not studied by the special students of the New Testament; and when a specialist in those sciences does come in contact with the New Testament problem, as in the case of one of the very greatest of them, Sir J. G. Frazer, he is found refusing to apply to it one of the avowed fundamental principles of his own science.

He who would critically face the New Testament problem, then, must have a general vision of the process of growth and building up of ancient religions in general, so that he may see the *cult* of Christ (independently of the documents) as a body of phenomena broadly analogous to those of the cults of Krishna and Buddha, Adonis and Attis, Isis and Osiris, Yahweh, Zeus, Apollo, Athênê, Dionysos, Serapis and Mithra. Not till he has considered how all these came to arise and flourish is he reasonably entitled to come to conclusions as to the necessity for "Personalities" as founders of any cult.

It is a problem with two sides—that of the creeds and rituals, rooted in folk-lore, and that of the economic process which builds up a folk-cult to the status of a system of revenue-earning temples and priesthoods. In the cult of Yahweh, the priest-hood, by the avowal of the competent scholars, is a revenue-seeking corporation from the point of the extinction of the local shrines to the last stand for

the temple of Jerusalem as the house of the true Rain-God. Yet the question is still quite commonly pronounced upon without even the preliminary proceeding of asking whether any of the God-names cited, which so long held, and of which some still hold, the adoring faith of millions of human beings, can conceivably stand for any originating Personalities at all.

So vital an issue as that of the origination of the Christian creed and Church is to be faced with the widest alertness to all the phenomena of religious evolution. Presuppositions as to the function of Personalities in the foundation of creeds have no more right of authority than inherited beliefs in the divine inspiration of sacred books. The task must be faced in the spirit of inductive science, if we are ever to reach inferences comparable in solidity to those of the accredited sciences, in contrast with which the mass of theology and theological pseudo-sociology is but a play of subjective prejudice.

But let us not fail to acknowledge that from chairs of theology, in Germany and Holland if not in England, have come potent reinforcements to the movement of radical criticism. Professor Van den Bergh van Eysinga, calling attention to the part played by Dutch scholars in the preparation of and for the myth theory, himself dispassionately yet crushingly rebuts the nugatory argument that there *must* have been one abnormal Personality as the first factor in the creation of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> And while the remaining English acolytes of Dr. Schweitzer are still burning incense to his name, the German experts are passing him by, dismissing his compromise as untenable.

<sup>1</sup> *La littérature chrétienne primitive*, Paris, 1926 : *Avant-propos*.

Time and again, official scholars have come within sight of true critical inferences which their "eternal halfness" withheld them from accepting. Thus Professor Blass, in his lecture on 'Die Entstehung und der Charakter unserer Evangelien' (1907, p. 22), suddenly observes that "on Harnack's method the Denial by Peter—in all the gospels—must be asserted out of ill-will to Peter," and that the same reasoning applies to the story of the folly of the mother of James and John. It is really a sound inference, though neither Harnack nor Blass will accept it; and other scholars, thus challenged, take the step they blench at.

This book had been completed when there came to hand the monograph of Professor Rudolf Bultmann, now of Marburg University, on 'Jesus' (1926), written for a German popular series on 'The Immortals.' For popular purposes it is "embellished with cuts" (at the end); but in the preface the eminent scholar unflinchingly reveals his critical standpoint:—

"There will not be found (*es fehlen*) in the following pages generalizations (*sämtliche Wendungen*) on the themes of Jesus as Great Man, Genius, or Hero: he appears neither as daemonic nor as fascinating; his words are not exhibited as profound, his faith not as compelling (*gewaltig*), his nature not as childlike. But neither is there anything on the eternal value of his mission, on his revelation of the timeless deeps of the human soul, or anything of that sort: the eye is solely directed to what he had *willed*, and what thereanent the Present can become as a furthering of his historical existence.

"For this reason also is the interest of the Personality of Jesus excluded. Not that I make a merit of a lack. For in truth I am of the opinion that we can learn no more (*so gut wie nichts mehr*) of the life and the personality of Jesus, because the Christian sources have not concerned themselves thereon<sup>1</sup> save very fragmentarily, and under an overgrowth

<sup>1</sup> Italics ours.

of legend. What has been written during a hundred and fifty years on the life of Jesus, his personality, his inner development, and so forth, is—insofar as it is not critical investigation—fantastic and romancist.

“One receives a strong impression of the kind when, for instance, one reads the brilliantly written *Geshichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung* (2nd ed. 1913) of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, or when one constates the differing verdicts of researchers on the Messianic consciousness of Jesus. Let it be remembered how greatly the verdicts diverge as to whether Jesus held himself the Messiah or not, and, if yes, in what sense, and at what time, and so on. When we remember, further, that it was really no small matter to think oneself the Messiah, that rather he who so regarded himself must have been thereby decisively specialized (*bestimmt*) in his whole nature, we must confess this: when doubt rules on such a point, it signifies that we know as good as nothing of the personality in question. I am personally of the opinion that Jesus had not held himself to be the Messiah; but I do not pretend to myself that on that ground I have a clearer idea of his personality.”

It is one of the ironies of debate that Dr. Bultmann, who also abandons many items of the Teaching, still thinks he has an audition of Jesus as Teacher; but none the less is his dismissal of the spurious predication about the Personality of Jesus a telling rebuke to the traditionists who so cheaply vend it, and a preparation for the sober study of the more radical theorem that the figure of the gospel Jesus is merely mythical.

It is important to realize that it is on the *gospel* Jesus that the debate turns, not on an issue as to whether “there was a somebody.” If it were argued that behind the composite structure of the gospels there *may* have lain an obscure historical episode which has partly affected that structure, there could be no critical demur. The investigation began, for the present writer, with an attempt to find such an episode, the starting-point being the Talmudic Jesus “Ben Pandira” or “Ben

Satda" or "Ben Stada." And though that clue cannot be traced to any decision, it is still impossible to rule it out of the area of possibilities. But what cannot be done is to find in the fugitive figure of the Talmudic Jesus the "Personality" alleged by the à priori argument. That argument-in-a-circle is scientifically worthless, inasmuch as it evades all the facts as to cult formation in the absence of any shadow of pretence of a Teacher of commanding personality. The Personality of the Gospels is demonstrably a literary formation.

The one clear opening in the documents for a theory of personal emergence occurs in respect of a circumstance never critically faced by the biographical school, namely, the Galilean background. In the gospels that background is built up to no purpose. The Christ emerges, operates, and in a manner triumphs in Galilee; then fails and leaves it to die at Jerusalem; where, nevertheless, he is made to speak of returning to the Galilean scene. Yet not even is the supernatural machinery used to make him do so; and there is finally no reason for believing that there was ever any Galilean "Christianity" at all. This is expressly admitted by the defence. Here then is a ground for surmising that "something" quite alien to the gospel story had happened in Galilee which motivated the gospel parade of that locality; and a tentative hypothesis in that regard is submitted in the Epilogue to the present work. But, once for all, this is no fulfilment of the assumption of a supernatural Personality answering to the gospel Jesus. That, we shall see, remains a fiction, a Myth.



## II.—HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The study is not in the least a fore-planned campaign of "destruction." It is not a strategy of "materialists." It may be said to have germinated, after the excursion of Bruno Bauer in pre-imperial Germany, from the scientific textual studies of a number of Dutch theologians (notably Pierson and Loman)—certainly not a revolutionary or a flighty tribe. Two of the foremost living exponents of the Myth Theory, Professor Arthur Drews and Professor W. B. Smith, are avowed theists. The undertaking is simply a more scrupulous continuation of the work of historic criticism, begun long before Renan, handled by him rather artistically than scientifically, and more vigilantly carried on by many serious scholars since. The real impulsion to an ever more radical treatment of the problem is just the failure of the would-be biographers to reach a cogitable solution—the failure that has been insisted on by Schweitzer, to the temporary satisfaction of Oxford and Cambridge, and fatally repeated by himself.

The present writer, as he has elsewhere stated, began more than forty years ago to trace, sociologically, the actual historic growth of the Christian Church, on the unhesitating assumption that it began with a Teaching Jesus, who had Twelve Disciples. It was the simple effort to connect that assumption historically with the whole of the documentary evidence that gradually forced him to surrender, item by item, the supposed primary data, and so postpone indefinitely the sociological construction he had set out to make, in favour of the necessary research as to the real foundations of the entire system.

This research involves at once the use of the labours of many modern scholars, from Baur and Strauss to Wrede and Schweitzer, and a bibliographical study of the text which neither these nor the specialists in textual scholarship have properly made. Concentrating on the problem of the compilation of the gospels from each other or from "sources," they miss many of the phenomena of perpetual accretion by late inventions as to action, though they recognize interpolations of doctrine. We have seen how all alike have overlooked the plain textual traces of the late interpolation of the Judas story, though the recognition of these might have actually saved the biographical theory from one of its most flagrant difficulties.

**The Drama.**—They have equally missed the textual evidence which goes to prove that the five-act story of the Supper, the Agony, the Capture, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, as it stands in the first two of the synoptics, was a *dramatic* text, reduced to narrative form with a minimum of necessary narrative, and added to the gospels after these, or some of them, were in circulation. This proposition used to be scouted on the score that Jewry was inveterately hostile to drama. It can hardly be so scouted by the expanding school of professional exegetes who see in the gospels a Hellenistic formation. German academic scholarship now avows the Greekish derivations of many of the wonder stories,<sup>1</sup> after the late Dr. Conybeare had derided the idea to the satisfaction of the traditionists; and Professor Burkitt and others avow the strength of the Hellenistic influence even at Jerusalem. The emergence of Greek influence

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, p. 147.

in a mystery drama thus becomes likely rather than otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

And, though the main strength of the case lies in the actual dramatic morphology of the gospels at this point, the probability is enhanced by the known existence of mystery dramas in connection with the worship of Osiris and other Saviour Gods. Perhaps the most important parallel of all is that cited by Professor Van den Bergh van Eysinga<sup>2</sup> in connection with the cult of Herakles, who, we know, was historically described by Diodorus Siculus (i, 2) as "going about doing good." As the Dutch scholar notes, the Senecan tragedy *Hercules on Oeta* is probably based on a previous "Stoico-Cynic" Greek tragedy attributed to Diogenes of Sinope, which is likely to have been a more interesting performance.

In Seneca's drama the Demigod, son of Jove by a mortal mother, details his services in freeing men of many evils, and claims to be received up into heaven. He has slain the devouring monsters; he has "descended into hell" and let the sunshine into the den of Cerberus; he has destroyed the Earth-God Antæus, and smitten down Busiris before his altars of human sacrifice. All the nations praise him: he has punished all manner of crimes with his naked hands: he asks but permission to ascend to heaven: he can find the way for himself through death. Through the jungle of the declamation of Seneca we follow the myth of Herakles and the vengeful Deianira. He, the analogue of Samson, is no "sinless" and sexless

<sup>1</sup> In this connection cf. T. Whittaker's study on "Origen and Celsus," in *The Metaphysics of Evolution*, etc., 1926, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *La littérature chrétienne primitive*, 1926: *Avant-propos*, pp. 16-18.

demigod, and the jealousy of his wife brings upon him the torture of the shirt of Nessus, for which he rends Lichas.

He, the universal victor, groans and weeps; his dolorous mother, Alcmena, comes to weep with him; but he masters his agony and resolves to die, undefeated, on the great pyre of his own ordaining, showing no weakness, comforting his mother till she can look on dry-eyed, and encouraging his comrades by his perfect fortitude in death. "Hark, my Father calls me, and opens the heavenly gates! Father, I come!" are his dying words. Then, when the *mater dolorosa* has gathered his ashes and has called on the world to mourn with her, there comes the voice of the ascended Herakles telling her to weep no more, as he has risen to heaven and sits with the immortals, having a second time vanquished death.<sup>1</sup>

Very different, certainly, is the short and simple and sexless tragedy appended to the gospels, the work, happily, of less literate hands than Seneca's; but equally a commemoration of a Cult-Hero who never lived. Simpler models than we can find in the secondary Senecan tragedy had served for the other; but a drama there was, staging the primordial sacrament and the primordial sacrifice; and the terse transcription at the end of the gospels reveals it.

Let the student turn for himself to the story of the Agony in Matthew and Mark and note how (Mt. xxvi, 44-6; Mk. xiv, 40-2), by the overlooking of an "exit" and an "enter," there has been a

<sup>1</sup> Professor Van Eysinga tells how a boy who had read the Professor's summary in his Dutch work on *Pre-Christian Christianity* copied the citations from Seneca for an exercise on the death of Christ, and received the congratulations of his pastor!

transposition of phrase which runs two speeches into one. Jesus is made to say, in one speech: "Sleep on now and take your rest;.....Arise, let us be going"; where in the drama he must have been made to say: "Sleep on now, and take your rest" on his *second* entrance; the final "it is enough" speech being spoken on the *third* entrance. Only a dilapidated dramatic text, uncomprehendingly followed, could have admitted of the confusion. Missing the clue of the dramatic character of the section, scholars such as Bleek, Volkmar, and Wellhausen have been content with the bad solution of making "Sleep on" an interrogation or an antiphrasis; while Loisy<sup>1</sup> finally takes the words to be addressed to the rest of the disciples, who, "without doubt," had remained awake! Still he finds the phrases "rather incoherent than lifelike," and surmises that a redactor has added the "It is enough" clauses. Dr. Montefiore tersely avows, without a hint of the dramatic *theory*, that "the triple going and coming are dramatic, but scarcely historic." The theory tells why.

Equally does the inference of a dramatic text explain the strange taciturnity of the disciples at the supper, over which even the exegetes have been moved to perplexity. Judas is declared to be a traitor, and they sit with him through the meal, doing nothing to interfere with his action. Plainly we are reading fiction; but why should fiction be so woodenly framed? We have only to realize it as drama, and the thing becomes intelligible. By face and gesture, in the play, the disciples could show their horror and their aver-

<sup>1</sup> *L'Évangile selon Marc*, in loc.

sion. It is the strict reduction of drama to bare narrative that makes the scene inconceivable.

The value of the all-round critical method, noting alike the textual phenomena and the significance of the content, is seen at once in that it explains the otherwise inexplicable unverisimilitude of the story of the Agony. Critics like Schweitzer, professedly recognizant of the anomalies of the "liberal" biography, no less than the journalists, lay and clerical, who deride the myth theory all round, are capable of believing in the historicity of a narrative which tells what Jesus said in prayer when, as the same narrative tells, the very disciples who had been selected to keep special watch had fallen asleep.

The story as it stands is the perfection of incredibility. We are told that the three chosen disciples, after seeing their Master "greatly amazed and sore troubled," and after being told by him, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: abide ye here, *and watch*," are found by him asleep as soon as he has spoken his prayer of three lines. There is no suggestion of an interval. They were asleep while he was praying! And these alleged prodigies of callous heedlessness are accepted as the witnesses to the words of the prayer!<sup>1</sup>

Let the reasoning reader ask himself, How came such a literary absurdity to be penned? and he will see there is only one solution. No serious narrator could have *invented* such a story *to be read*. But the moment we realize it as originally a drama the

<sup>1</sup> It is significant of the nature of the "historical sense" of Dr. Klausner that, concerning this story of things seen and heard by men sound asleep, he pronounces that "The whole story bears the hall-mark of human truth; only a few details are dubious." Among these he does *not* recognize the central falsity.

literary absurdity disappears. The *spectator* was meant to *see* the Saviour falling on the ground, and to *hear* him praying; the slumber of the disciples created for him as spectator no difficulty. It was only when the drama was faithfully and reverently reduced to narrative form,<sup>1</sup> by simple souls incapable of critical reflection, that the whole thing became the incredibility it is for us in the gospels.

In the third gospel some perception of difficulties is already to be surmised. The fusion of two speeches to the sleeping disciples into one is avoided, only a final speech being given, though the disciples are quaintly described as "sleeping for sorrow."<sup>2</sup> It may have been that the third gospel-writer, or a redactor, had access to a simpler text of the drama, though on the other hand this text at other points agrees with Matthew and Mark. The same inference of an awakening sense of difficulty is suggested by the fact that in Luke the story of the midnight trial before the Sanhedrim disappears.

Here again, a recognition of the *dramatic* structure of the text in the earlier gospels would

<sup>1</sup> One of the established results of gospel bibliography is that the "early gospel" or gospels *lacked the story of the tragedy*. It must have been added *en bloc* when the MS. of the mystery-drama was released. Dr. Burch, in the work already cited, tells us (p. 39) that "Among the *newest* results of the critical study of the gospels are those which demonstrate that the birth and youth and crucifixion, in the expanded form of the received Greek text, are documents appended to the original extent of the *Lives* of Jesus Christ." Any one who cares to consult *The Synoptic Problem for English Readers*, by Alfred J. Jolley (1893), will find presented, thirty-four years ago, those "newest" results, which had been previously reached by B. Weiss. And it was all done from an orthodox point of view. To some of us it communicated light which has not yet reached Dr. Burch.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Klausner confidently describes them as sleeping off a heavy meal!

have relieved the biographical school of a stumbling-block. But they refuse to be relieved; they must hold on to anything that helps anyhow to fill a gap. Professor Schweitzer likewise refuses. He must have the Agony for his theory of the "self-consciousness" of Jesus, as he must have a traitorous Judas to tell the priests that Jesus claims to be Messiah; though alike in the impossible story of the night trial and in Luke's story of the trial at dawn Jesus is made to say enough, from Schweitzer's own point of view, to be accused of "blasphemy" without any revelation from Judas.

Again returning to that lamentable figure, let us confront Professor Schweitzer's manipulation of the gospel story with the question, What *had* Jesus taught his disciples? Nay, what did he have disciples *for*? To keep them in darkness? To qualify them for crazy treachery? To develop in the best of them a psychic state which enabled them to fall asleep immediately after he has told them he is sorrowful unto death, and bids them keep watch?

**The Group's Mode of Life.**—These are not captious questions: they are the challenges necessary to rouse to attention those who have dutifully read the gospels without due critical reflection; those who, as did the present writer in his youth, before he was forced to scrutiny, take for granted that a wandering Teacher with twelve selected disciples, whose sole ostensible occupation is casting out devils and listening to parables, presents a quite natural historical aspect. On inquiry it will be found that the picture is a factitious construction, hardly more plausible for Palestine than it would have been for a modern community.

And the synoptics not merely fail to exhibit the



economic mode of life of the wandering group: they give contradictory accounts, evidently framed separately for doctrinal or forensic purposes. In one story Jesus is made to say that "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." In another, referring to John the Baptist as an ascetic, who had on that score been labelled as possessed by a demon, he is made to say: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber"—a kind of reproach of which there has been no previous hint. In the very next chapter (Mt. xii) we are told how his disciples "were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn and eat them." In Luke (vii, 33-6) the speech about eating and drinking is immediately followed by the story of Jesus accepting the invitation of a Pharisee "to eat with him." These separate stories, like that of the order to the disciple to "leave the dead to bury their dead" which follows on the "Foxes have holes" apologue, are doctrinary inventions. *The gospels show no knowledge of the actual life of the alleged Teacher and his Twelve Disciples.*

In the narrative of the sending out of the Twelve to "preach" and to work miracles, the Lord is made to say: "*Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses.....for the labourer is worthy of his hire.*" As if, in the alleged circumstances, they *could* get gold and silver. And all this in the same breath with the declaration: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." This again, by the admission of students who believe in a historical Jesus, is the figment of a period in which the established cult, as seen on foot in the adapted 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' was

carried on by peregrinating "prophets" who were maintained for a day or two at a time by those to whom they ministered, already loosely organized in groups. The twelve disciples could have had no such pretext in the alleged situation, with a gospel consisting solely in the phrase: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The commission and command to "Heal the sick, *raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils,*" is a sufficient assurance that here we are outside history.

When we find Dr. Klausner explaining with his usual certitude that "*Jesus felt the fatigue of constant teaching*, and after his enemies had become numerous he sent out [his] twelve disciples that *they too* might preach the speedy coming of the kingdom of heaven and the need for repentance and good works," we realize anew the fatality of uncritical traditionism. The Christian reader will doubtless recall that Matthew expressly alleges (xi, 1) that *as soon as* Jesus had given his missionary disciples their instructions "he departed thence *to teach* and preach in their cities." The Jewish critic, bent on presenting a realistic figure, cancels as many texts as do not suit him, and ignores the fact that the gospel upon which he professes specially to rely, that according to Mark, is at this point even more palpably unhistorical than the other.

But the true rebuttal of all the biographical accommodations and inventions lies in recognizing the demonstrable lateness of the entire story of the mission of the Twelve.

## III.—THE TWELVE MYTH

A certain slight air of actuality, doubled with a much stronger suggestion of symbolism, attaches to the synoptic account of the choosing of the first four disciples. Immediately after being "tempted of Satan" and being ministered to by angels, Jesus, according to Mark, "preaches the gospel of God, saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the evangel." That is as much as we ever learn of the evangel preached later by the disciples. The Saviour then accosts two fishermen, the brothers Simon and Andrew, saying, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men"; and "straightway" they followed him. Another pair, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are similarly accosted and enrolled. In this case the father, a Galilean fisherman, has hired servants.<sup>1</sup>

So far, if we are prepared to grant that the supernatural figure presented by Mark may have been a real person haloed and magnified later by tradition, and that a commanding personality might thus hypnotize fishermen, the story might be reckoned biography, inasmuch as, after an apparently interpolated paragraph, relating miracles, the scene shifts to the house of Simon, the four disciples attending. In the next chapter, after more miracles, Levi the son of Alphæus, a toll gatherer, is called to discipleship in the same fashion. When we note that in the 'Talmud the problematic Jeschu "ben Panthera" or "ben

<sup>1</sup> A touch probably invented to satisfy the reader that no wrong was done to the father.

Pandira," who dates a century earlier, is said to have had five disciples, it seems possible that that may be a historic basis. But when we further note that the names given to those five disciples in the Talmud are Matthai, Nakai, Netzer, Boni, and Thoda, there is seen to be strong ground for suspecting a retrospective myth. The names appear to have been loosely invented to account, first, for Matthew and Mark, the gospel authors; secondly (Netzer) for the "Nazarene" sect; and thirdly (Boni) for the "Ebionite" sect; while "Thodi" (which, however, suggests the "Thaddæus" of the gospel list) may have been motivated by that of Theudas (Acts v, 36).<sup>1</sup>

From that dubious beginning we proceed straight to the sudden "calling" of the twelve "whom he named apostles" (Lk. vi, 13) on the mountain top (Lk. vi, 12; Mk. iii, 13; Matthew says nothing of a mountain). Among them are two Judases, one being Iscariot "who became a traitor" (Lk. vi, 16). In all the synoptics the details vary. Levi the son of Alphæus disappears, and a Matthew is substituted, with a James the son of Alphæus. Only in Luke are there two Judases: in the other lists a Thaddæus takes the place of one.

In the fourth gospel, which gives a totally different account of the calling of the first five (Andrew, Simon Peter, another unnamed, Philip and Nathaniel), Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Klausner (p. 29) writes that "Thus we have both Mattai and Naqai, who are obviously, as Krauss perceived, Matthew and Luke." The cited work of Krauss appeared in 1902. The matter is of no great importance; but it may be noted that such a theory (with Mark instead of Luke; and suggesting the Ebionites as the basis of the name Boni, and the Nazaræans as the basis of that of Netzer) was put by the present writer in 1893 and again in 1900. See *Christianity and Mythology*, first ed., p. 375.

makes many converts in Samaria, *before* there is any mention of "the twelve," and they are suddenly introduced (vi, 68) without any list whatever, and with no account of a "calling." Nor does any synoptic ever tell us how the company of thirteen was maintained, though the fourth gospel takes for granted a "bag," of which Judas was keeper and plunderer.

If there had been a real historical list, how were such variations possible in such a vital matter?

Turning to the Epistles, we find no trace of any knowledge of a Twelve save in the one passage in I Cor. xv—an interpolation *in* an interpolation. "Paul" shows no knowledge of such a body. In Galatians he speaks of "chiefest" apostles, and "pillars," never of a Twelve. All that we can infer from the interpolation is, as aforesaid, that it was made when currency had been found for a story of the appointment of Twelve, but *before* there had been any written story of the betrayal by Judas. This is the first documentary standing ground for those who profess to stand by documents.

How then could the story of the Twelve have come into existence? The primary orthodox assumption is that Jesus appointed twelve apostles because there had been Twelve Tribes of Israel. In the eighteenth century, the historian Mosheim made the much more important suggestion that the choice of number was made *because the Jewish High Priest had Twelve Apostles*, who served as his messengers and collectors among the Jews dispersed in Gentile countries. That is unquestioned historical fact. And when, in 1883, there was published the recovered manuscript of the 'Teaching [*Didachê*]

of the Twelve Apostles,<sup>1</sup> once widely used in the early Church, but thereafter completely suppressed, Mosheim's hypothesis received a new and decisive development for those who were ready to draw the plain inferences.

That document is, throughout the first six sections, obviously and wholly Judaic—just such an ethical allocution as the High Priest could address to the Jews of the Dispersion in their synagogues. Then come Christian accretions, beginning with a rule for baptism, of which rite only in the fourth gospel are we told that it was practised by Jesus. The inevitable inference is that what had been a Jewish encheiridion, bearing the title of 'The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' became a Jesuist or Christist one, with Christist specifications; and that the use of the Jewish foundation and title *entailed* the invention of a Christian story of an appointment of twelve apostles by the Founder. It was the absolute lack of any real historical list that left the way open for the variations in the gospel list, of which the Matthæan is perhaps the earliest as they now stand.

Even at the stage of the Christian expansion of the 'Teaching,' the Christist doctrine is primitive. Jesus at the first naming (c. 9) is "thy [the Father's] servant," who has made known "the holy vine of David." *There is no doctrine of salvation through sacrifice, no mention of the crucifixion or the resurrection.* And in c. 14, in the remarkable phrase "the Lord's Day of the Lord" (Kuriakēn Kuriou) or "the Lord's Lord's-day," we have the decisive proof that there were "Lord's-days" of other religions, the Christian being only one of a number.

<sup>1</sup> A revised translation of this document, with notes, is appended to the author's volume on *The Jesus Problem*.

Here we have a document evidently older than much of the matter of our gospels, to which it makes no allusion save in the phrase (c. 8) "as the Lord commanded in his gospel," referring to the Lord's Prayer, which we know to have been pre-Christian. The curtain has been lifted on a primitive Christist community, employing and expanding a manual taken over from the Jewish Twelve Apostles, with not even a pretence of a list of names of a Christian Twelve. Thus go by the board, as myth, the Christian Twelve, and with them Judas, "which betrayed Him."

In Justin Martyr's First Apology (c. 39) we view the Twelve as a quite unhistorical group for the Christians of the time of Marcus Aurelius: "For from Jerusalem there went out into the world men, twelve in number, *and these illiterate*, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God." In a later chapter of the same document (c. 66) we read that "the apostles, *in the memoirs composed by them*, which we called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them" as to the Sacrament—declared by Justin to have been by evil daemons "imitated in the mysteries of Mithras," which were prior. And here, too, there is no trace of the Judas story.

#### IV.—THE EVANGEL MYTH

Thus also is dismissed the gospel mystification of the intangible Evangel. When we ask, What was the gospel preached by the Twelve (including Judas) when they were sent forth by

the Master? there is no answer save that it was the bare proclamation of the speedy coming of the Kingdom of God, which had been already, according to the records, the gospel of John the Baptist and *his* "disciples." Jesus, then, on the face of the records, had nothing to teach his disciples in the way of an evangel save that formula—that, and the art of "casting out devils," and the stress on "Repent." For the meaning of the parables was expressly to be withheld from the populace, who were unable to understand them.

Thus the staggering conception of an ethical teacher indoctrinating his disciple with sublime lore, and then callously watching him sell his soul to Satan, is dismissed once for all. There were no Twelve Jesuine Apostles; there was no preaching of a gospel by them; there was no training of Judas; there was no betrayal. All that, at least, is myth.

The new problems opened up by the myth theory, indeed, are manifold; and there is room for a hypothesis that the sacramental cult which must have been one of the primary elements involved a sacramental meal of Twelve, with a ritual representative of the sacrificial God, after the manner of the traditional Sacrament of Twelve in which Aaron, the Anointed (= Messiah), and the (twelve) elders of Israel "ate bread with Moses' father-in-law before God" (Exod. xviii, 12). A sacramental meal of twelve, with a president, seems to belong also to the practice of the Jewish Temple; and the mystic and mythic figure of Melchisedek, "King of Peace," accepted by early Christians as a type of Jesus, is also associated with a sacrament of bread and wine. It may have been that in an early cult of a Jesus-God analogous to Adonis and



Osiris twelve celebrants were known as "Brothers of the Lord," before the official cult of the gospels and Acts was set up on the basis of a story of resurrection and Messiahship. But that remains matter of speculation.

What we are entitled to infer from the general history, as against gospels which are visibly compiled for purposes of edification, is that there *was* a ritual cult in which a sacrosanct personage was celebrated in the fashion of the sacramental cults which were so common among the pagans, and which we know to have subsisted among the Semites.<sup>1</sup> If there is one principle upon which mythologists were agreed before there arose the question of applying their principles to Christianity, it is that "the ritual is older than the myth." That is to say, wherever a story of a divine personage is related as the origin of a rite, the story is an invention to account for the rite, of which the origins are for the worshippers pre-historic. This is a warranted induction from the whole mass of mythological lore, and from the fact that all ancient histories of States and institutions begin with myths in the same fashion.

If eminent anthropologists, who have actually affirmed this principle, renounce it when they come to the Christ cultus, it is their own affair. The scrupulous scientific student of the past must adhere to established scientific principles where they are plainly applicable. The entire aspect of the gospel records, especially where they allege a systematic evangelization during the life of the God-Man, forbids any rational belief in any such

<sup>1</sup> It should be stated here that this view is not accepted by all exponents of the myth theory.

procedure. The very institution of the Christian Twelve Apostles we have seen to be an invention, arising on a Jewish documentary basis. The story of the Mission of the Twelve is thus already cancelled; but its falsity is made plain by the documents themselves.

It is specially significant that in the first gospel the story of the sending-out of the twelve (immediately after the "calling") is so heedless an insertion that there is no mention of their return; and after a chapter in which Jesus deals with John we find him walking in the fields with them—they "hungry" as aforesaid; with no word of record of their experience between. That experience is put by Mark (vi, 12, 13) in two bald sentences: "And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." That such a record should pass with instructed men as history, and should be stressed in our own day by clerical scholars as coming from an "eye-witness"—to wit, Peter—is a sufficient reminder of the distance to be covered before the gospel story is generally subjected to rational study.

Luke, in turn, is content with one sentence: "And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere." But in this avowedly late gospel we have next the story (c. x), absent from the others, of a sending-out of seventy more disciples, with the same set of commands, and a special instruction as to entering the houses of the friendly, "eating and drinking such things as they give." And the seventy do make a report: "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."

This is of course no evidence for anything. The story of the seventy is rejected even by orthodox scholars as an invention (for more radical critics, a "Paulinizing" invention) to establish a *Gentile* mission by the Founder, "seventy" or "seventy-two" being for Jews the accepted number of "the nations," and possibly of a subsidiary body of tribute-collectors employed by the High Priest. That the sending-out of the mass-mission should be a historical fact, and yet have been overlooked by the other synoptics, is a proposition recoiled from even by the vowed enemies of the myth theory. And yet a very little play of critical reflection will enable any one, not committed to the tradition, to realize that the story of the Sending-out of the Twelve is equally unhistorical. It is an unrelated insertion in Matthew, where there is no hint of either return or report; and the bald report in Mark, visibly an afterthought of a redactor, is in itself a confession of non-knowledge. The entire record is absolutely "in the air."

The Sending-out of the Apostles, in short, is but an earlier example, on a larger scale, of the documentary procedure with regard to the Judas story. It has been imposed on a gospel which originally lacked it, and which, in its earliest form, must have lacked even the mention of the Twelve. Thus the record decomposes, piece by piece.

We are compelled to infer that in their earlier form the first and second gospels had no mention of Twelve Apostles; and that only some time after that item had been imposed on the record was there superadded the narrative of the treason of Judas, seeing that alike in Matthew, Mark, and Luke it bears specific marks of interpolation. But the sending forth of the twelve to preach the

evangel is also a late interpolation. Its introduction in Mark is in a different context from that in Matthew, where it is made to follow immediately on the "calling." In Mark, where the calling (iii, 13) takes place on "the mountain," we have that additional mythological detail, telling of a later symbolism; but the mission is inserted later (vi, 6b-13), in a fashion that proclaims either interpolation or an improvement by Mark on the other narratives:—

And he went about the village teaching. And he *called unto him the twelve*, and began to send them forth two by two.....And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

If this could be regarded as an original passage in Mark, it would alone suffice to rebut the Neo-Unitarian assumption that that is the earliest gospel. The closing sentence of the passage rounds off the episode, where Matthew leaves it without any close. Had Matthew copied Mark, such an item could not have been ignored. But, curtailing as it does the story of the address to the Apostles in Matthew, it is evidently superimposed on Mark, thrust in with a minimum of concern for verisimilitude in the introduction.

It is only on the myth theory that the phenomena are at all intelligible. The story of the Mission in Matthew, like the whole apparatus of the Twelve, is part of the Judaizing propaganda which claimed pre-eminence for the original Judaic section of the Church. The myth of the Twelve comes first. Later comes the story of the Mission, claiming anew a primary divine status for the Judaic section. In Mark, which, however and whenever first composed, is Gentilist and not Judaist, all the Judaistic elements in the instructions

to the twelve are omitted. In Luke the Paulinizing purpose is carried out in this connection by the further invention of the Mission of the Seventy, a counter-stroke to the Mission of the Twelve.

It is at a later stage still, when the Gentilizing Mystery-play has been added to the synoptics, that the special impeachments of Judas and Peter sway the balance still further on the Gentilizing side. By this time the surviving Gospels, with Luke in currency, are predominantly "Catholic," though the Judaic nationalism of the teaching in Matthew cannot be got rid of. "Luke's" story of the Herod trial, added to the others, throws the guilt of the execution of Jesus decisively on Jewry, with *no* concern for the resulting theological problem, specially raised by the story of Jesus, as to how that is to be counted an evil act which, on the "Catholic" view, accomplishes the salvation of mankind.

Among the incidental problems is that of the probable date of the impeachment of the whole twelve: "Then all the disciples left him and fled" (Mt. xxvi, 56*b*): a momentous clause affixed to another with which it has no congruity. It must be supposed to have been inserted later than the story which makes Peter follow Jesus to "the court," but significantly sets up confusion by placing him both "within" and "without." In Mark (xiv, 50) the statement is briefer, but still incriminatory: in Luke, curiously, it is absent, as if the compiler, or the redactors, shrank from that wholesale inculpation. The inference would seem to be that the Paulinizing tendency in Luke, as in the Acts, is partly controlled by a spirit of accommodation; and that this, which was overruled at points by the later insertion of the stories of the

betrayal and of Peter's denial, was left unchecked in the matter of the non-mention of the flight of the eleven.

In the fourth gospel also that imputation is absent, "another disciple" being there specified as having accompanied Peter to the palace of the high priest. But there too, it is important to note, the story of Peter's denial (xviii, 25-7) is a late insertion. Verse 24 runs: "Annas *therefore* sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest"; and verse 28: "They lead Jesus *therefore* from Caiaphas into the palace." Here, in the last gospel of all, the story of the denial figures as a late addition. This conclusion, long since propounded as part of the myth theory, has latterly been put as an unquestionable textual fact by Dr. Rudolf Bultmann,<sup>1</sup> Professor of Theology at Giessen (now at Marburg), apart from any discussion of the myth theory. There is thus no critical escape from the conclusion we have reached on that particular issue. The story of the denial appears to be even later than that of the betrayal.

Thus far, we are led to the inference that in their earlier form the gospels had not only no Betrayal story and no Denial story, but no story or list of Twelve Apostles, and, *a fortiori*, no story of a Mission of the Twelve. They must then have set forth, whether with or without the Birth story, a Jesus who appealed to belief either as a Teacher or as a Wonder-Worker. Is one of these, then, a residual historical fact?

<sup>1</sup> *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, 1921, pp. 162, 163.

## PART III

### THE MYTH OF THE TEACHING

#### I.—THE SILENCE OF THE EPISTLES

WHEN, leaving the Gospels and Acts, we read quite independently the remaining books of the New Testament (a thing never done by the orthodox, and never with due reflection by the biographical school) we find ourselves in presence of a cult resting on two main beliefs: the prediction in the Old Testament of the coming of the Christ, and the effect of his blood-sacrifice in procuring salvation and eternal life for and through Jews.

That is the burden of the Epistles to the Hebrews and to the Romans, of the "Petrine" epistles, and of the book of Revelation. These documents are in the main specifically Judæo-Christian; and when we find in Revelation, first, a series of attacks (ii, 2, 9; iii, 9) which can rationally be interpreted only as directed against Paulinizing or Gentilizing missionaries and their converts in Asia Minor; and, later, sets of passages (vii, 1-8; xxi, 10-14) specifying the salvation of selected Israelites or (xvi, 1-4) "sealed" male ascetics, interspersed with one or two passages (vii, 9-17; xiv, 6-7) extending the salvation to all nations, and so making the sealing useless, we realize that, just as in the gospels we find a Judaic gospel of salvation overlaid with Gentilizing propaganda, there has been some Gentilizing manipulation here. The passages vii,

9-17, and xiv, 6-7, are plain interpolations on the preceding text, and half-hearted at that.

When we say "on the preceding text," we are not granting that that was a unitary document.<sup>1</sup> The more strictly the Apocalypse is scrutinized the more clearly emerges the fact that even the Judaic matter which, as regards the Christian evolution, is primary, is but an adaptation to Judaic purposes of a mass of older matter, in part clearly traceable to Babylonian sources. Babylonian astrology and sun-myth and angel-lore are plainly present in matter which has passed, till about a century ago, as divinely inspired mysticism about the Virgin Mary and her child Jesus. But for the restricted purpose of the present inquiry it is sufficient to note that "Revelation" was a Judaic book, manipulated first by Judaic Christians, and partly manipulated after them by Gentilizing Christians. If its "Twelve Apostles" are Christian, they are first Judaic-Christian, and it is a reasonable hypothesis that the whole construction is partly derivative from the eschatological doctrine expounded in the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" a century before the Christian era.

The basis is thus Judaic; and the Epistle of James, a visibly Judaic document with some Jesuine interpolations (as "Our Lord *Jesus Christ of glory*"), is not even touched with the doctrines of blood sacrifice and salvation by faith, the latter of which it expressly repels. Hence it was that Luther called it "an epistle of straw." In the "Pauline" epistles we have the Gentilizing propaganda exhibited in conflict with the Judaizing. Whether

<sup>1</sup> As to this problem, see the relative section in Professor Van Eysinga's *La littérature Chrétienne primitive*, 1926.



genuine or invented to deal with an actual situation, they prove a keen conflict between a Hebraic Christism, which insists on the Mosaic law in the matter of circumcision, and an innovating movement which protests that circumcision has nothing to do with the gospel of Christ.

But in one great negative aspect all of those Judaizing and Gentilizing documents agree: they show no knowledge of the "personality" of the gospel Jesus, or of the multifarious body of teaching which the gospels put in Jesus' mouth. They do not once mention even the title "Son of Man," which is used scores of times in the gospels, though only once in the Acts. There is no reason to suppose that the writers had ever heard of Jesus as being so described, whether by himself or others.

The Petrine epistles, we know, are generally regarded by critical scholars as spurious; and the second as not even by the author of the first; the former being commonly dated between 112-140 C.E., and the second about 175. As to the authenticity of the Paulines there is an unending debate. But the outstanding fact remains that, whether genuine or not, they are silent as to any human life, or characteristics, or teaching of Jesus. Even when doctrines corresponding to some in the Sermon on the Mount are put forward, nothing is said of their derivation from the gospels. Thus the exhortations at the end of the twelfth chapter of Romans, some of which are nearly identical with passages in the Sermon on the Mount, are put without any suggestion that Jesus so taught. Precisely where we should expect that the epistle would dwell on its teaching as coming from his mouth, he is neither named nor thought of. The Pauline text claiming

the Lord's word for the principle that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel is flagrantly late, proceeding upon a gospel interpolation. To suppose that it is primary is to draw the most cynical of all possible inferences.

Exception may be claimed to occur (1) in the passage in I Peter, ii, 21-23, where the recipients are told that Christ "suffered for you, leaving an example for you, that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself<sup>1</sup> to him that judges righteously"; and again (2) in Paul's allusion to "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" in Second Corinthians, x, 1. But all this is intelligible as a tradition apart from and prior to the gospels. It implies, in fact, total ignorance of the large amount of vehement denunciation of Scribes and Pharisees by the gospel Jesus—a feature much more prominent, for the critical reader, than any show of meekness and gentleness. That is indeed claimed *by* the Teacher for himself in one text (Mt. xi, 29); but the very nature of the claim has moved many exegetes to doubt its authenticity.

Incidentally we have to note that these passages in the epistles offer no hint of the betrayal by Judas. Further, the Petrine writer goes on to say that Jesus "himself bore aloft<sup>2</sup> our sins in his body on the tree"—an old conception of human sacrifice, with no mention of the cross.<sup>3</sup> We are not in the atmosphere of the gospels; and certainly not in

<sup>1</sup> *παρεδίδου*—"surrendered"—the verb so often used in passages rendered as telling of betrayal.

<sup>2</sup> See margin of R.V.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Acts v, 30; x, 39; xiii, 29.

that of any Teaching. We are told simply what Jesus did *not* do.

It may be argued that in such a document as First Peter, composed with a leaning to the Jewish side and professedly addressed to Jewish Christians, though not anti-Pauline, it would be natural to suppress the fact that the gospel Jesus said many virulent things against the Pharisees. But why should the epistle-writers invariably abstain from quoting the words of the Master if they were in currency? The first resort to this course is that which we meet with in the 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,' after it has undergone Christian development. While Christian scholars believed that the Epistles were all written before the composition of the gospels, the problem might not obtrude itself, though on the orthodox view the apostles must be held to have known what Jesus taught. But when critical scholars are forced to assign late dates to many if not most of the Epistles, the question becomes pressing. The constant assumption of the antagonists of the myth theory is that a great Teacher, a great Personality, *must* have operated to gain the ear of men to the Christian teaching. In point of fact, we see the propaganda being carried on far into the second century without a sign of any knowledge of, or any interest in, any teaching Personality whatever.

The silence is so complete that never once in the whole epistolary literature, or in the Apocalypse, do we find applied to Jesus either of the gospel descriptive terms Nazarene or Nazirite,<sup>1</sup> or the description "of Nazareth"—a thing habitually ignored or unobserved by Christian writers, but

<sup>1</sup> *Naxoraios* or *Nazaraios* in the Greek.

very strange indeed if we are to suppose that the gospel Jesus had been commonly so described. Equally noteworthy is the non-mention of the parents assigned to him in the gospels.

Champions of the biographical school, such as the late Dr. Conybeare, have insisted that the names of those parents were known from the first. For this there is no documentary support in Mark, claimed by the assertor as the primary narrative. Joseph is never there mentioned, and Mary is named only in passages which leave her relation to Jesus undecipherable. Save for the delusive mention of "Brethren of the Lord" in First Corinthians, ix, 5, and the phrase "born of a woman" in Galatians, iv, 4, there is in the Epistles no suggestion that the Christ had earthly kith or kin. Their whole drift is away from any such conception. As in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he is presented as the Son of God, as "our Lord," as "the Lord of glory." The passage in Second Corinthians, v, 16: "*even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know (him so) no more,*" gives less than no help to the biographical claim. If Jesus "suffered" at all, it had to be "in the flesh"; but the epistolist will go no further. The passage is purposely vague; and T. S. Green translates it "if we even have come to know Christ *as to flesh,*"<sup>1</sup> recognizing its equivocal character. Its writer can have had no certitude as to an actual human Jesus.

When then we note that the writer or writers of the Epistles of John complain bitterly of heretics who deny that Christ has come "in the flesh," it

<sup>1</sup> Sharpe translates: "though we once acknowledged a Christ after the flesh, yet now we acknowledge such no longer."

becomes doubly astonishing that no attempt is made to prove his earthly parentage. For the critical scholars, the Johannine epistles are late. Professor Schmiedel, dating the Fourth Gospel after 132 c.e., puts the first Epistle between that and the year 140;<sup>1</sup> balancing between the views that the second and third epistles are later,<sup>2</sup> or earlier,<sup>3</sup> than the first. There is certainly no external trace of any of them till after 140. And still, late as they are, they give Jesus neither a local habitation nor an earthly parentage, or even a following of Twelve Disciples.

Even in the Acts, where (save in x, 38—a redacted passage) Jesus is “the Nazirite” (*Nazoraios*, mis-rendered “of Nazareth” in A. V. and R. V.) and Peter is made to call him “a man,” as would be expedient in Jerusalem, he is “a man shewn plainly forth from God to you by miracles and marvels and signs,” never “a man who captivated you by his Teaching.” “This Jesus God raised again, of which all we are witnesses.” That is the evangel. Even in purposive fiction there is no suggestion of a Personality expressed in remembered Teaching.

In fine, outside of the gospels the New Testament has nothing to tell of a Teaching Jesus, and nothing of a personality recognized as human, save in one presentment of him as an unresisting sufferer—the conception *required* for the doctrine that he was the prophetic “Suffering Servant” who became the saving sacrifice; and actually *given* in the “Messianic” chapter of Isaiah (liii, 7) on which the Christian theory was founded: the very stuff of myth.

<sup>1</sup> *Encyc. Biblica*, col. 2558.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, col. 2561.

<sup>3</sup> *The Johannine Writings*, Eng. tr. 1908, pp. 215–17.

## II.—THE SPECIAL TEACHING IN THE GOSPELS

The latest "biographer" of the gospel Jesus writes<sup>1</sup> that the "notable gap" between the retirement of Jesus and his remnant of faithful disciples from Jewish into heathen territory "may fitly be filled by a sketch—of necessity brief—of that aspect of the Lord's activity which, from His day to ours, has never ceased to shape men's lives and aspirations—viz., His imperishable work as a Teacher."

We have just seen that for more than a hundred years after the date assigned for Jesus' death the early literature of the movement, from the Judaic Apocalypse to Second Peter, presents absolutely no sign of any such preoccupation among Christian writers. The Teaching of Jesus is the one thing they never mention in regard to him. He is "the Lord"; he is also a Sufferer and a Sacrifice; a Teacher he is not.

And this is thoroughly in keeping with the fact that the Epistles, like the Gospels, are steeped in the Jewish atmosphere of "eschatology," the doctrine of "the last things," the belief in the speedy coming of the end of the world, in which the Christ is to play the part of Redeemer of all who have put their faith in him. So obvious is this preoccupation that modern Neo-Unitarians, as we have seen, are divided between the internecine solutions that Jesus was a moral teacher who had *not* figured as a Messiah, and that he was an "eschatological" Messiah who propounded only an "interim ethic" for a world that is soon to be

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Warschauer, *The Historical Life of Christ*, p. 167.

finished. Of that vital conflict there can be no solution by way of any re-interpretation of the gospels as substantially records of a real life. The problem can be solved only by a study of the gospels as the factitious documents we have already seen them to be.

**Conflicting Teachings.**—Long ago considerate churchmen began to be exercised no less by the conflict of doctrines in the gospels than by the conflict of narratives. Here was a Teacher who orders his disciples not to go into any city of the Gentiles or the Samaritans, yet declares even in Matthew (viii, 11-12) that many Gentiles shall enter the kingdom of heaven while "the children of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness." In one connection he declares that every jot and tittle of the law must be fulfilled; in another he combats Sabbatarianism.

Even more profoundly perplexing is the unbridged and unbridgeable chasm between the exhortation to the faithful to pray little, and in one simple form, and the accounts of the Teacher as spending whole nights in prayer, and as having his gospel proclaimed by disciples who "continued stedfastly.....in prayers." As great is the contradiction between the self-stultifying claim, "I am meek and lowly in heart," put in the mouth of the utterer of so many invectives, and that other claim, "A greater than Solomon is here."

Everywhere and always we are being arrested by incongruities of action and of doctrine. The gospel Jesus addresses a great multitude in parables; and when the multitude are gone he tells his disciples that they alone understand the mysteries, while parables are addressed to the multitude "that seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing

they may hear and not understand ; *lest haply they should turn again and it should be forgiven them.*"

**Composite Teaching.**—Of such contradictions, and moral anomalies worse than contradictions, the only rational explanation is that they come from different hands—from gospel-makers or interpolators who have doctrines of their own to which they desire to give Dominical status. No unifiable conception of a real teacher can be drawn from them. It is only in the Sermon on the Mount that we get a fairly coherent ethical teaching, and that teaching is (1) already current Judaic lore;<sup>1</sup> (2) obviously compiled by collectors of such lore ; (3) certainly not a Sermon at all ; (4) such a packed series of apophthegms as could not have been reported or memorized at one hearing ; (5) absent for the most part from the other gospels.

Why is it thus absent? It is difficult to frame any tolerable explanation short of the inference that it is incorporated late in the first gospel ; since the ignoring of such a mass of teaching by the others is unintelligible unless we are to suppose that their compilers either knew it to be Judaic or objected to much of it. If "Mark" be, as Dr. Hermann Raschke argues, really the edited gospel of Marcion, the ignoring of the Sermon there may be purposive. On either view we are so much the further from the assumption that Jesus figured primarily as a Teacher.

On the other hand it is easy to conceive, in view of the Didachê, how the promoters of the early Jesuine movement felt the necessity of imposing a body of ethical doctrine on early collec-

<sup>1</sup> See details in *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd ed., Part III, Second Division, § 6.



tions of cryptic or fantastic *Logia* such as we may infer, from the testimony of Papias and from the modern discoveries of non-canonical fragments of *Logia* in Egypt, were the "Sayings of Jesus" first put in currency as "gospel." The 'Teaching of the Twelve Apostles' had put moral doctrine in its forefront. To leave Jesuine moral doctrine to that manual would be to confess didactic bankruptcy. Without moral doctrine, stories of the Infancy and of miracles could appeal only to the most simple-minded. Where men could read, something better was called for. The possession of Sacred Books was the great asset of the Jewish religion as against all others. The Christian Church, in competition with the synagogue, was necessitated to have them.

And in the world of partially-Hellenized Jewry such matter was readily producible. It was all already current, between the Septuagint, the non-canonical literature, and the lore of the schools, where the greater Rabbis must have been appreciated by many as they deserved. It is customary, indeed, to assert that on the literary side—apart from refinements of Greek style—the gospel allusions and parables are unmatchable in previous literature. Uncritical champions of tradition pronounce that the gospel parables make an impression never felt before or since. It is not thus that Canon Charles, the most competent of our experts in that field, speaks of the Jewish literature intermediate between the Old Testament, with its Apocrypha, and the New. Rather he finds a variety of matter which, in his view, must have been assimilated by Jesus. It is not critical rectitude, on the other hand, that dwells on the impressiveness of the parables in face of the con-

clusion come to by so many scholars that some of "the best" of the parables are among the latest additions to the gospels, and certainly post-Jesuine.

It is indeed a curious result of pre-supposition that writers who expressly claim a lifting and deepening effect for the teaching and personality of the Founder cannot even conceive that that influence could be adequate to the production of impressive teaching by others in the Founder's name!

But that is how, in general, presupposition always works. One series of apologists tacitly relieve the Founder of teachings which they find to be embarrassing; another set refuse to believe that any one else could have produced teaching that is quite acceptable. And we must not severely denounce these spontaneous chicaneries of the theological schools; since it is on record that the most staggering sample of fallacy in that connection comes first from the pen of John Stuart Mill, though it is adopted by Dean Inge.

For it was Mill who confidently argued<sup>1</sup> that the better parts of the gospels *could not* have been invented by Galilean fishermen (a suggestion which no scholar had ever made), by way of enforcing the belief that they *had been* invented by a Galilean carpenter. Mill is simply taking for granted the proposition that needed to be proved. He had made up his mind in advance, without any comparative study of pre-Christian ethical lore, that (a) the ethic of the gospels is original and remarkable, and (b) *therefore* must have come from Jesus the Galilean carpenter. Whether it could have come from literate compilers of Jewish ethical lore he never even inquired. The immense diffi-

<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*, pp. 253-4.

culties in the way of a critical belief in the unity of the gospel teachings he never even perceived, and consequently never explored.

Had he done these things, he could not have penned his further argument to the effect that (1) the fourth gospel *was* the work of a disciple; that (2) it "imported matter from Philo and the Alexandrian Platonists"; and that (3) "the East was full of men who could have stolen any quantity of this poor stuff." Here Mill was unpleasantly disturbing the popular consensus of sentiment. The "poor stuff" in question was and is for many Christian scholars, even among those who confess the non-historicity of the document, very superior matter indeed, possible only to a writer of culture and philosophic depth. Nay, for Matthew Arnold, as for his father before him, the fourth gospel had a quite special historical, moral, and literary value. He was settling the problem in terms of *his* partialities and presuppositions, as was Mill on the other side. And both alike were blind to the real possibilities of the case.<sup>1</sup>

But what Arnold did has been and is being done since his time. B. Weiss twenty years ago declared for the historicity of the fourth gospel. While most of the historicists respectfully set it aside as being rather an edifying than a historical document, clerics, not unscholarly, however uncritical, are now confidently contending that it "is a faithful mirror of the time of Jesus," that it is somehow really "historical," and that it makes, in fact, the most ineffable "impression" of all.<sup>2</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> See *Christianity and Mythology*, Pt. III, Second Div., § 12.

<sup>2</sup> See the Rev. Dr. C. F. Nolloth's *The Fourth Evangelist*, 1925, p. 171 and *passim*. This work is an excellent sample of the scholarly operation of the "will to believe."

why should they not so argue? If they are told that John is inconsistent with the synoptics, they can answer that the synoptics are often inconsistent with each other, and with themselves. Why then strain at the fourth and swallow the other three? The position of those who stand on the synoptics and put aside the fourth gospel is undermined in advance.

What the unknown author of the fourth gospel did in the way of assimilating mystical ideas from Alexandrian Platonism, other unknown authors could, and, as we are forced to infer, did accomplish in the way of collecting and colligating the abundant ethical and eschatological lore of the canonical and post-canonical religious literature of the Jews. To call the collection in the Sermon on the Mount "original" is to say the thing which is not.<sup>1</sup> Even in Mill's day the contrary had been shown by competent scholars, and he gave them no heed. That some of the parables were "original" when first inserted in one or other of the gospels may well be true; but no candid student can deny that the most attractive are plainly late additions, not attributable to the gospel Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

And here we are face to face with that fatality of a forced choice between contradictions which is the Nemesis of all unsound belief. The champions of the doctrine of a "unique personality" constantly assure us that the personality in question had the effect of raising the moral levels of life once for all in the world in which he taught. Yet the moment

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Middleton Murry (*Life of Jesus*, pref.) cites an English bishop who avows that "Jesus added nothing to human thought." Mr. Murry is scandalized; but the Bishop doubtless went on to explain away his avowal, as do so many others.

<sup>2</sup> See *Christianity and Mythology*, Pt. III, Second Div., § 11.

it is suggested that the influence could include the creative activity of new minds in the service of the new cause, we are angrily told that such a thing is impossible.

Even Mill becomes heated when swelling the chorus. Later theologians, indignant at the assertion that even the parable of the Good Samaritan is not the highest flight of ancient ethics, meet it by an arrogant challenge to produce anything to compare with that. The very purpose of the parable is to suggest to Jews that a Samaritan may be a better man than they; and the champions proceeded to argue that only one man, a Jew, could imagine such a Samaritan! It is charitable to assume that they were entirely ignorant of the story of Lycurgus forgiving and reforming the brutal young aristocrat who had destroyed his eye, and, instead of putting him to death as the citizens invited him to do, brought him back to them after a month with the words: "You gave me a bad citizen: I give you back a good one." For if the angry theologians should deny that that is a still finer story than the tale of the Good Samaritan, they would reveal that their moral appreciation is no wider than their scholarship.

That story of Lycurgus—which like the other is probably a "parable" and not a historical record—is one of the evidences, to which modern Christian scholars are so strangely blind, of the possibility of good ethical thinking and high parabolic art among nameless men in a world in which the commonest method of conveying new doctrine was to ascribe it to some distinguished name. There are many attractive tales and parables in the Old Testament, products of Eastern "haggadic" art, to which no scholar can pretend to attach the name of any

author. The stories in Genesis are no longer believed by educated men to be the work of "Moses." The books of Job and Ruth can be assigned to no author. And those two fictitious books, as it happens, abound in the literary "realism" which ingenuous scholars declare to be a proof of the special historicity of "Mark"—this in the face of the much more marked realism of certain episodes in "John."

What Eastern haggadic art could do for various purposes in the books of the Old Testament canon, and in the extensive Jewish post-canonical literature, it could do for the new Christian movement in the second century "after Christ," when the old humanist activities were being driven into that and other new channels under the heavy hand of imperial Rome, which had everywhere made an end of the relatively free municipal life and strife in virtue of which Greece and Asia Minor had been for centuries a scene of unmatched intellectual as well as political activity. In that manifold Eastern world Semitic and Hellenistic thought and literature met and reacted on each other. The post-exilic emergence of new ethical thought in Jewry is inferably a matter of penetration from outside. Christian scholars have repeatedly insisted on the testimony of the Book of Acts as to the continuous presence of "Hellenistic" elements even in the Church at Jerusalem. Why can they not realize that among these and the other Gentile elements specified as present in the life of Jerusalem, to say nothing of what may have been done at Antioch, there were likely to be men capable of developing ethical doctrine for the new religion? And when the movement had been diffused not only through Asia Minor and the Isles but in Egypt and in

Italy, what more likely than that some men of education connected with the Church should take further part in both the narrative and the didactic accretions to the gospels?

Even the scholars who are sworn to prove the historicity of Jesus, one would suppose, would be glad to recognize the interpolated character of the stories of the Betrayal by Judas, the Denial by Peter, and the supernatural slaughter of Ananias and Sapphira. If their slavery to unanalysed documents withholds them even from that amount of new perception, their case is hard indeed. If, on the other hand, they recognize, as so many of them do, the external character of passages such as the predictions of the Fall of Jerusalem, the lyrico-mystical "Come unto me," and the "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," as well as the lateness of a number of the parables, how can they consistently refuse to contemplate the inference that the main mass of the ethical matter, and in particular the clearly literary and non-oral composition of the Sermon, tell of a multitude of hands?

But there is nothing so obstructive to historic or scientific vision as a presupposition. Men who have been nourished on the Greek classics, who have read in Euripides the song of Hippolytus to Artemis, who know alike from Theocritus and from Ezekiel how for ages the women of old "wept for Tammuz," who have read their Homer and their Æschylus, who know the tale of "outworn Demeter, searching for Persephone"—all the record of the infinitely various beliefs which through thousands of years whole races cherished concerning imaginary Gods and Goddesses—are yet professedly assured that there *must* have been a marvellous historic Christ to account for the Christian creed.

Yet the most careful study by the most devoted professional students does but confirm the critical inference that the teachings in the gospels are supererogatory to the primary movement. The gist of Professor Schmiedel's survey<sup>1</sup> stands thus:—

"The context in which we now find the sayings of Jesus must never.....be taken as a trustworthy guide in determining what the original meaning may have been. In every case the context tells us only what the evangelists, or their predecessors, found it to mean; indeed in many cases it is impossible to believe that even for them the place where they introduce the saying is intended to convey any hint as to the meaning. A source like the *logia*<sup>2</sup> laid naturally very little stress upon this point. *The greater number of the utterances of Jesus are like erratic blocks.* All that one sees with perfect clearness is that *they do not originally belong to the place where they are now found.*"

Professor Schmiedel, of course, has his own carefully stated grounds for regarding the gospels as broadly historical; but even he appears to fail to see the just, or reasonable, inferences from his own avowals. And where he fails the ordinary run of defenders of the faith have still less suspicion of the historical possibilities of the case, and are incomparably more uncritical in their attitude to it.

To this day, men are endlessly occupied in finding justifications for "faith," proofs of its salvatory functions, encomiums for its supposed power of illumination. And to this day, perhaps, few have realized its main function in human life, which is the paralysing of the thinking reason. This is not a matter of merely religious belief; that is but the predominant form, the largest illustration of the process. It is a process arising in every department of mental life, from the dominion of

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. GOSPELS, col. 1886.

<sup>2</sup> The inferred collections of "dicta" which had been circulated separately.



"rule of thumb" in the simplest of routine activities to the ankylosis of critical judgment in the most general operations of judgment. Faith is but the static attitude, the assumption, whether fervid or stolid, that we know all about the matter in hand, when the least stir of sober doubt would reveal that we do not.

Thus it is that, for most men, scholarly or otherwise, the immeasurable discussion of religion and Bible, God and Jesus, has left them blind to the two highly significant and highly interesting facts that alike the Judaic and the Christian religions (to name no other) are products of human collaboration. They speak of the greatness of "the Book" without realizing the simple outstanding fact that the Bible is a colligation of two literatures, such as might be made by collecting in two "books" the literatures of Greece and Rome. And, seeing without perceiving the concrete documentary phenomenon, they entirely miss the sociological phenomenon, the social potency of combinate effect in literature.

Men who, ethically moved, declaim with conviction about the value of organization and "team-work" in life, never reach the conception of "team-work" in the gospels. And yet the gospels are really the outstanding example of "team-work" in book form; even as the rise and duration of the Christian system is the outstanding instance in sociology of the persisting power of organization as against the chance life of isolated effort and movement. Relatively sane heresies have perished; insane dogmas have subsisted. What prevents emotional and professional people from seeing these things is just the presupposition of a Great Personality.

Rousseau, facing the problem with all the certitude of ignorance, before even Astruc's thesis of the composition of the Pentateuch (1753) had met with any intelligent study, declaimed that "it would be more inconceivable that four men in accord had fabricated this book than that one alone should have furnished the matter.<sup>1</sup> Never had Jewish writers found either this tone or this morality; and the gospel has characters of truth so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable that the inventor of it would have been more astonishing than the hero."<sup>2</sup>

The theorem is at once false in fact, false in dialectic, and false to the whole previous argumentation of the *Profession du foi du vicaire Savoyard* in which it occurs. The gospels are the work of many more than four hands; they are emphatically *not* "in accord"; they *do* copy the words of many previous Jewish writers who *had* found "this tone and this morality," and of Greek writers who had done so likewise; there is at work, for the most part, not "invention" but compilation; and there is nothing "astonishing" in it all for any one who knows the relevant previous literature, Jewish and Pagan.

Yet we find a Jewish scholar<sup>3</sup> to-day who, falsely implying that Rousseau was discussing the *historicity* of Jesus, which was not then in question,<sup>4</sup> and eliding the statement as to the impos-

<sup>1</sup> None the less, Rousseau avows that the gospel is "full of incredible things:.....which it is impossible for any sensible man to conceive or admit."

<sup>2</sup> *Émile*, liv. iv. *Œuvres*, ed. 1817, vi, pp. 111-12.

<sup>3</sup> Klausner, as cited, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Voltaire knew friends of Bolingbroke who denied the historicity of Jesus. But Rousseau does not even mention any such denial. He is discussing the originality of the teaching.

sibility of "Jewish authors" writing as one Jew is all the while alleged to have spoken, professes to find in that rhodomontade, as did his compatriot Joseph Salvador before him, "an adequate rejoinder to the conglomerate of pseudo-scientific proofs advanced" by myth theorists. All that the passage does is to stultify to the uttermost Rousseau's whole previous polemic as to the capacity of man to find his own ethic without priests or revelations. In place of all the authorities he discards he has but posited one Jewish revealer, with a monopoly of moral truth. We are listening to the ethico-literary judgments of a rhetorician who cannot conduct his own polemic without absolute self-contradiction. And this is the authority that suffices, on the whole issue of historicity, a Jewish biographer of Jesus who professes to write as a historical critic. Deep answereth unto deep.

So far from owing their measure of appeal, as distinct from their traditional authority, to the revelation of any cogitable personality, the gospels make it in virtue of the very multiplicity and dis-co-ordination of their matter, the result of the free collaboration of a hundred hands; some inserting divergent ethical scrolls, some parables, others counter-parables; some historical fictions, some counter-fictions; some reports of dialectic, some apocalyptic allocutions; others, lyrical or elegiac outbursts; all interspersed with solemn old tales of miracle, all rounded off with a mystery-drama naively reduced to narrative form.

For millions, the battle is won with the delightful myths of the Infancy; for millions more, all turns on the condescension of Deity to appease Deity by dying as a redeeming Sacrifice for human sin. All serious attempts to expiscate a Personality do but

elicit insoluble strifes of inference and interpretation. The thesis of an all-conquering Personality is the figment of an unveridical sociology, which will not stoop to analysis. Christianity subsists, as it began, not as the rule of a Personality but as a "Going Concern." For the bulk of Christendom, the Personality is to this day adequately represented by a figure on a cross, or a feebly sentimental portrait, conforming to a fixed convention, expressing only an appeal to uncritical traditionism.

And thereby hangs the tale of the wrath of Carlyle at Holman Hunt's 'Light of the World,' rapturously acclaimed by Ruskin for its laborious symbolism, in absolute blindness to its artistic nullity. Here was faith paralysing art, exactly as it had done in ancient Egypt. Carlyle, for once made in a measure artistically percipient by his repulsion, declaimed to the unlucky painter's face, "raising his voice well nigh to a scream," his fierce derision of that "papistical fantasy," "bedizened in priestly robes and a crown, and with yon jewels on his breast and a gilt aureole around his head." For the biographer, craving lifelike portraits of his heroes, it was the worst of many failures, worse than Da Vinci's "puir, weak, girl-faced nonentity, bedecked in a fine silken sort of gown, with gems and precious stones bordering the whole." Even Albert Dürer, picturing the story of the Man of Sorrows, "had canons of tradition which hindered him from giving the full truth."<sup>1</sup>

Carlyle was voicing in advance the emotions of

<sup>1</sup> Hunt's *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, 1905, i, 352 sq. The passage is reproduced in vol. iv of D. A. Wilson's *Life of Carlyle*, ch. xxxv.

the present-day school who seek to create for themselves a Hero out of a disestablished God. What he wanted was a realistic face for "the noblest, the brotherliest, and the most heroic-minded Being that ever walked God's earth." How, he asked, had the crowd of ancient sculptors neglected to give it? Thus can wilful men fool themselves by pretending to validate the past of their fantasy. A clever modern French artist has done something that might have satisfied Carlyle, who in his old age took satisfaction in a 'John Knox' that was *not* John Knox, but had a beard of "practicable length." And the modernist artist is but dazzling the modernist hero-worshipper with a semblance of "reality." We shall doubtless be told that Carlyle's "impression" proves the greatness of the figure that he had created for himself, which is as cogent as would be the claim that his operative notion of "the Man Odin" proves the historicity of the primary God of Norse mythology.

Carlyle's method with Odin is in strict fact the method of the whole body of professional and amateur theologians who in this age insist on certificating the historicity of Jesus by the strength of their feelings about him. As little as he in his heroics will they deign to face the mass of mythological science which points to the induction that the Sky-Gods are precipitates of the earliest animism of the peoples, and that the Son-Gods are just as surely precipitates of a later folklore. Even Carlyle himself could not but see that the Norse Gods are Nature-Gods; nonetheless must he have an Odin who was "a Teacher and Captain of soul and body," the deepest thinker of his time, who preached a religion of Valour, for which he was deified.

This in the very act of noting how Snorro and Saxo and Torfaeus make biography out of every myth, and reduce it all to chronology; and how "any vague rumour of number had a tendency to settle itself into Twelve." As was the audience which accepted from Carlyle the necessary historicity of Odin, with his Twelve, so is the audience which to-day choruses the minor prophets who scornfully dismiss the notion that Jesus and his Twelve can be anything but actual historical personages.

Yet not even the vast inertia of a standing faith can keep thinking theologians satisfied with the spontaneous scorn of the multitude for any suggestion that their records are but parts of a mythology. They know that the records have been crumbling under their hands for over a hundred years; and they are fain to discriminate. It is Professor Burkitt, one of the most competent and most temperate of living English theologians, who has avowed<sup>1</sup> that "the old orthodoxy, regarded as a fixed system, exists no longer. It is not merely that breaches have been made in the wall, or that projections which stood in the way of modern thought have been cleared away: the whole building has collapsed. Where Gibbon saw an effete and old-fashioned building, we are confronted with a heap of ruins. There are few stones one upon another that have not been thrown down; but the heap remains—what are we to make of it?"

Thus speaks the accomplished and candid scholar. Very different is the tone of the "shouting varletry" of lay and professional publicists who think to dispose of the literature of the myth theory in the

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Beginnings*, 1924, p. 8.

temper and manner of Mr. Bumble. But they, among them, have ten readers for the scholar's one.

It is for the historical student, recognizing that the matter must be patiently reasoned out, to meet all this idle apriorism by the marshalled evidence of the incompatibility of the gospel records, alike as to narrative and doctrine, with any biographical hypothesis that posits a recognizable Teacher. That has in fact been shown, as we have seen, by the latest exponents of new unitary biographical theories, each in turn protesting that the rival theories are unwarranted, till a vivacious statement of the "eschatological" theory creates first a new hope and then a new alarm.

At this moment, if we can make any accurate inference from the latest output of Lives and "solutions," the process of proving the historicity of Jesus is reduced to a blank assertion that he gave a "revelation" independently of all the records which are alleged to contain it—a proposition advanced seventy years ago by M. Paul Janet, and often since repeated. Such is the thesis of the work of the Rev. Dr. Vacher Burch,<sup>1</sup> of Liverpool Cathedral, on 'Jesus Christ and his Revelation,' effusively dedicated to Bishop A. A. David. That work makes no attempt to rebut the proof that the gospel teachings are wholly derivative, and either pre-Jesuine or post-Jesuine. It simply flouts all the derivations as exercises in "talmudizing," and asseverates *ad nauseam* that whatever Jesus taught conveyed a "revelation" which the same teaching could not and did not convey when penned or spoken by others.

To this hardy asseveration, however, there is

<sup>1</sup> Cited above, p. 60.

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significantly appended what is for the British public a practically new item of "Christian evidence"—to wit, the claim that the medieval "North-Russian" version of Josephus (discovered twenty years ago and not yet published in full), taken with Hegesippus, proves Josephus to have inserted in the Aramaic or Hebraic original of his 'Jewish Wars' passages about John the Baptist which justify us in believing him to have really written the passage about Jesus in the 'Antiquities.' It is hardly possible to overstate the tenuity of the argument (hereinafter examined) thus excogitated by Dr. Burch. But the very fact that such a tactic is resorted to by a polemist who proclaims the presence of a supernormal "revelation" in the gospel teachings is eloquent of the pressures of the myth theory on the ecclesiastical consciousness.

It is inconceivable, indeed, that Dr. Burch's tactics, whether declamatory or documentary, will be endorsed by the majority of serious theologians. Thus far, at least, they have staked their cause on a more comprehensive negation of the myth argument, always indeed on *à priori* lines, but with a professed reliance on the "historical sense" of educated men, sometimes accompanied by a more or less contemptuous characterization of that of the supporters of the myth theory. To that defence, then, we must finally address our attention.



## PART IV

# THE RESISTANCE TO THE MYTH THEORY

### I.—RECENT ACTIVITIES

*Goguel; Wright; Klausner; Warschauer*

It would not be too much to say that during the past twenty-five years, apart from scholarly arguments on the biographical side, the direct opposition to the myth theory in its modern forms has consisted mainly in saying (1) that the Christian Church and creed *cannot* have arisen save on the historic basis of one commanding personality; (2) that no theologian of importance has accepted the myth theory; and (3) that accordingly it is "exploded." Any one capable of realizing the nature of an argument will recognize that these propositions amount to exactly nothing as rebuttals. The first simply begs the question. The second is merely a claim that theological scholars in the mass refuse to accept a theory which would prove them to have staked their careers on a delusion: which is exactly what some of the myth-theorists, at least, expected. The third is an empty appeal "to the gallery." The bulk of the matter of the gospels is actually given up by the scholars who are claimed as denying the myth theory.

Further, it is important to the student to realize that, apart from a few conscientious scholars who have attempted no detailed refutation, and who for

the most part merely frame new arguments for the historicity case, the vocal resistance to the myth theory is carried on by robustious censors who have either not studied it at all (the common case) or have only cursorily done so. The late Dr. F. C. Conybeare, who was not a mythologist, did but contemptuously misrepresent it at certain detached points, upon which he was more than fully answered. The Rev. Canon Streeter, who refers his readers to other men's alleged refutations, makes no more pretence to have studied the literature for himself than to emulate the courtesy which marks the scholars who have done so. He cannot even be credited with what he amiably assigns to some supporters of the myth theory—"superficial and second-hand knowledge." In this connection he appears to have no information whatever.

The great exception to the rule of discourtesy among those who explicitly repel the myth theory is the recent work of Professor Maurice Goguel;<sup>1</sup> and to him is fitly to be given the first place in this survey. It is in every way satisfactory that the defence should be undertaken by such a highly qualified scholar and such a courteous disputant. Of all the expressly defensive treatises thus far produced, his is the most—one might say, is almost alone—marked by perfect amenity of temper. Himself an "advanced" critic of the documents, he assumes no pontifical airs and feels no theological malice, contenting himself by arguing the main issues, as he sees them, in the spirit of

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus the Nazarene—Myth or History?* By Maurice Goguel, Doctor of Theol. and Lit. (Paris), Prof. of Exegesis and N.T. Criticism in Faculty of Free Protestant Theology (Paris). Translated by Frederick Stephens. (T. Fisher Unwin; 1926.)

historical science. We may thus congratulate ourselves on having the best that can be said for the defence at this stage of the debate; and this in a competent translation.

In one respect, indeed, Prof. Goguel's book will be found by students disappointing. Though he broadly states the myth theory, he does not in detail examine it, and indeed does not seem to have studied it. Thus in regard to the works of the present writer he has the note: "Concerning Robertson, see Schweitzer (*Gesch.*); Guignebert, p. 88." But Schweitzer avowedly does not, or can only with difficulty, read English; and he certainly had not read the works in question, of which he gives a misrepresentation too absurd to have proceeded upon any knowledge. Prof. Goguel, however, is doubtless entitled by theological usage to take the course he does, which is that of simply putting his own case for the historicity of Jesus on the basis of the disputed records, from the standpoint of the broad principles of historical evidence.

Taking this course, M. Goguel somewhat compromises his case by arguing, in an obscure paragraph (p. 29), that M. Couchoud's account of the case of Jesus as unique, and therefore an enigma for the historian, is in effect an attempt to prohibit history from "dealing with great personalities, and to exclude from its domain a Julius Cæsar, a Mahomet, a Luther, and a Napoleon, and thus to suppress one of the most important factors on human evolution." This is an *ignoratio elenchi*. The persons named are in no sense enigmatic in the way that the Gospel Jesus is. A distinguished French expert has declared to the present writer that the problem of the historicity of Jesus is insoluble, because "there are no documents"—that

is, no historical documents, properly so called. This cannot possibly be said of any of the four personages named by M. Goguel.

When he comes to the quasi-historical documents, M. Goguel is forced, as a candid scholar, to admit that there is only an inferential argument for an original mention of Jesus by Josephus; and that, if the forged passage in B. xviii of the 'Antiquities' be wholly removed, the preceding and following paragraphs "are in perfect connection with each other." Surprisingly weak, however, is his proposition (p. 47) that Josephus really kept silence on the subject of Christism because "this cult was a menace to Rome." Was Jesuism a menace at all? Was not Judaism itself much more of a menace to Rome in Palestine? The plea really amounts only to one more begging of the question as to the status of Christism when Josephus wrote. The entire defence as founded on Josephus and the Latin authors, in fact, remains in M. Goguel's hands as weak as ever; and one turns for the strength of his case to his handling of the *à priori* probabilities and improbabilities.

And here again, when we come to the first concrete issues, we find him in effect begging the question. Thus in regard to the problem of Jesus' three cognomina—"the Nazirite," "the Nazarene," and "of Nazareth" (all alike absent from the Epistles and the Apocalypse)—he pronounces (p. 52, *note*): "It is impossible to connect the word Nazarene with the notion of the [[Jewish Nazirite] sect, *for* the Christian tradition.....has preserved a *clear memory* that Jesus was not an ascetic like John the Baptist." But the historicity of the Christian tradition is the thing in dispute! The tradition preserves *both* of the incompatible aspects.

Here emerges the tactical trouble set up by ignoring the details of the myth theory. Part of that theory is that the anti-ascetic stories are purposive attempts to deflect the cognomen from its original significance to that set up by the formula "of Nazareth." M. Goguel admits that the disciples of John the Baptist were called Nazarites, and concludes that the names "Nazarene" and "Christian" were given to the Jesuists by their opponents. Then the stronger is the case for the view that the Nazareth story and cognomen are purposive myths.

It belongs to M. Goguel's method that his attempt to account for the gospel stories of the cult of the Name of Jesus where the disciples had not been is quite unsatisfying. At times he may be partly justified (as at p. 60) in charging myth-theorists with something like question-begging, as when a term is claimed to be symbolically used (though symbolism is averred also by the historicists); but in reality the verdict that the Pauline view of Jesus "contains no historical element" is not a begging of the question, but a justifiable account of the Paulines *as documents*. So many supporters of the myth theory, again, take for granted the priority of Mark that M. Goguel is not open to special criticism for doing so; but that assumption is nevertheless an arbitrary element in the case for historicity. Like our English experts, he ignores the argument of Hermann Raschke that the Gospel of Marcion was just "Mark." And when he argues (p. 72) that before the compilation of the Gospels had begun "there existed an oral tradition *capable* of preserving the facts with remarkable fidelity," he strains the probability argument in a startling fashion.

His case is perhaps at its best when he argues,

as some distinguished rationalists have done, that the apparent absence of Jewish denial (as against the Gospels) of the historicity of Jesus is a proof thereof. This argument, as it happens, we shall find<sup>1</sup> absolutely destroyed by a Rabbinical scholar who nevertheless affirms the historicity of Jesus. But in this very connection M. Goguel commits a bewildering contradiction. After putting the claim on pp. 70-1, he proceeds to deal with the argument of S. Reinach from the doctrine of the Docetists, and comments (p. 78) :—

“To this theory M. Couissin *rightly* objects that the answer to the *Jewish negation* would have been without efficacy, since *the Jews denied that which the Docetists affirmed—namely, that Jesus had been seen and heard, either as an illusion or otherwise.*”

When M. Goguel thus insists that “the Jews” *did* deny that Jesus had been seen and heard, how can he also maintain that they, or some of them, did not deny the historicity of Jesus? He leaves a critical reader wholly mystified.

Hardly less unlucky is his attempted answer to M. Reinach’s argument that the Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians proves the historicity of Jesus to have been currently denied. The passage founded on is given thus :—

“I have heard certain men say,” writes Ignatius: “If I do not find (a certain thing) in the archives, I do not believe in the Gospel. And as I replied to them: It is written (in the Old Testament) they answered: ‘That is the very question.’ But for me the archives are Jesus Christ, His cross, His death, His resurrection, and the faith which comes from Him.”

The translation is M. Reinach’s; and M. Goguel is liberal enough to write: “The text of the passage is not certain. For basis of discussion we

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 138.

accept that of Reinach." For forensic purposes he had better not have done so. The passage given is rather freely reconstructed, and it comes from the "longer recension," whereas many scholars claim that only the shorter is genuine.

But if M. Reinach's reading is accepted, M. Goguel's defence is a miscarriage. He wholly misses the point, as put by M. Reinach, concerning the Old Testament testimony. It is that the opponents (whom M. Goguel strangely supposes to have denied that there *was* any Old Testament testimony) declared that very "testimony" to be destructive of belief in the historicity. "You argue," they say in effect to Ignatius, "from the prophecies. That is just the trouble. The gospel story of Jesus is apparently a mere construction *from* the prophecies. We want actual historical evidence. Where is it?"

It is hardly necessary to add that, by reason of his critical tactic, M. Goguel makes no attempt to meet the mythological argument as to the story of Barabbas. That argument is that the story in question is plainly unhistorical, as M. Loisy reluctantly admits, and is intelligible only as an attempt to dispose of a Jewish protest that the humiliated and crucified Jesus of the Gospels is visibly an elevation to independent status of the "Jesus Barabbas" of an ancient and familiar annual ritual. While such issues are ignored, M. Goguel's case remains fatally incomplete even as a *plaidoirie*.

On the other hand, M. Goguel makes some quite fatal admissions, without realizing it. Thus on p. 176 he writes that "The identification of Jesus with the paschal lamb is, in fact, current in ancient Christianity. It is very old, since it is already

found in the first Epistle to the Corinthians." The "since" is a slender foundation; but the proposition is really a capitulation to the myth theory. How should the impression of a great outstanding *teaching* Personality become at the very outset absorbed in the concept of the paschal lamb?

Again, we have (p. 208) this concession to the myth theory: "It is conceivable that the tradition of the words and sayings of Jesus may have been enriched by aphorisms or declarations which were not originally attributed to him [*e.g.* Acts xi, 16 (wrong refs. in Goguel)], but we are unable to discover with certainty any fact of this kind in the Gospel tradition. It would, moreover, only be a question of agglomeration, and would *presuppose* the existence of the Gospel tradition." Emphatically must we retort that it would *not*: it would presuppose only the existence of a number of *Logia Jesou*. Again the Professor is arguing in a circle. The myth theory posits the *previous* currency of the Jesus-name as divine, a result of an old-standing Hero-God-cult. It is part of that theory that *Logia Jesou* would be current; and, once begun, would multiply. M. Goguel does not realize the issue.

Furthermore, his plea that we cannot be sure of invented *logia* in the gospels is destroyed by a mass of critical testimony. Absolutely every progressive critic of eminence admits the non-authenticity of a number of Jesuine sayings in the gospels. But the decisive thing is the Sermon on the Mount. When it is realized that that document, in mass, is an ascription to Jesus of moral sayings that were current long before the time assigned to him, the pretence of a "previous tradition" of sayings by the gospel Jesus becomes preposterous.



Equally unhappy is M. Goguel's assertion (p. 80 *n.*) that "the *majority* of those who deny the historical character of Jesus repudiate the testimony of Paul's epistles. M. Couchoud is the sole exception." Here the Professor definitely reveals the smallness of his acquaintance with the literature of the myth theory. Neither Professor W. B. Smith nor the present writer has staked it on a general repudiation of "the testimony of Paul's Epistles." As he admits, Professor Drews argues only that certain passages (as I Cor. xi, 23) are interpolated. But so argue several professional exegetes who do not reject the historicity of Jesus. So argued the present writer before he rejected it. And, as we shall see,<sup>1</sup> that interpolated "testimony" is *as testimony* destroyed (even by the admission of a historicist champion) by the fact that Paul is made to profess to speak on a supernatural revelation.

In this connection M. Goguel involves himself in insuperable difficulties. Admitting that Paul's "I have received" carries that claim, he resorts here also to the illicit device of claiming that it "presupposes" a human tradition. What, then, on that view, should induce Paul to ignore the evidence in question? That the passage is a twice redacted interpolation is the one solution that clears it of the charge of sheer charlatanism. Paul, as he admits, believed in a *pre-existent* Jesus. M. Goguel thinks to clinch the argument by claiming (p. 87) that "The controversies between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles *establish* that the latter *boasted of having been witnesses of the life of Jesus*—a fact which Paul did not contest." This is pure surmise: neither the boast nor the admission is on

<sup>1</sup> Below, pp. 133-5.

record; and the boast, on the face of the case, would have been worthless. Many thousands, according to the gospels, had been said to be *witnesses*.

The most curious of M. Goguel's oversights is his complete non-recognition of the significance of the story of the descent of the Holy Ghost (Acts i-ii). If the apostles were really understood to have a decisive claim in respect of having "witnessed" the life and death of Jesus (whom they were declared to have forsaken in a body), why that fiction of the miracle of the Holy Ghost? To the eye of the mythologist, it is all a palpable process of fiction upon fiction. But for the historicist, what is the solution? Evidently the inventors felt that the apostolicity of the apostles needed a special sanction; and it becomes an interesting problem whether the claim of Paul or the claim of the Judaizers to the "gift of the Holy Ghost" came first. But, either way, the thesis of the admission by Paul of the "witnessing of the life of his pre-existent Jesus" goes by the board.

When, again, he advances the familiar argument from the epistolary allusions to "the brethren of the Lord," he almost entitles those of his own side to reproach him with non-recognition of the seriousness of the difficulty created by the orthodox interpretation.<sup>1</sup> How can we reconcile with the gospel stories of the repudiation of Jesus by all his kindred the assumption that the "brethren" of the later allusions were actually his brothers in the flesh? They do not appear in the Acts save at i, 14, where they momentarily and inexplicably appear with "the women" and Mary, all there-

<sup>1</sup> See the problem discussed below, p. 139 *sq.*

upon entirely disappearing from the action. When, then, did or could such brothers attain authoritative status in the cult? Only as the group title of a "fraternity" is the term comprehensible. I think I could supply M. Goguel with a better argument for his purpose than that which he employs. But he might well murmur, upon such a proffer, "*et dona ferentes*"; and as the argument would not be finally valid it had better be left unspecified.

At times, indeed, reading M. Goguel, one almost despairs of establishing with him any logical common ground, any principles of right reasoning, so surprisingly does he extract evidence from what is quite fatal to the claim he is putting. He affirms, for instance, that the Marcan text (xii, 37; also Lk. xx, 44) in which Jesus denies the Davidic descent of the theoretic Messiah is "beyond question" as to authenticity, "because the text goes directly counter to the conception of a Davidic Messiah *universally* received in the Church since Paul." One despairs of following such reasoning. It affirms (1) that Jesus *certainly* repudiated Davidic descent; (2) that Paul knew this, which must have been proclaimed by the apostles *if* the text be genuine, yet absolutely disregarded it; (3) that Paul's Davidic doctrine completely drove out the anti-Davidic doctrine alike in the Gentile and the Judaizing communities; and (4) that Mark *must* have put in writing a true saying *because* nobody accepted it!

Cannot the Professor see that the anti-Davidic *logion* is just part of the battle of fictitious testimonies between the two sections? That the anti-Davidic view is an argument put in the mouth of Jesus by a gospel-maker or an interpolator at a time when the Davidic view was *not* welcome in

Gentile-Christian circles?<sup>1</sup> That, in fact, it is as plainly factitious a *logion* as any in the New Testament? On his view of a "universal" pro-Davidic belief, how did Luke also come to give it? Does he seriously pretend that Luke gave *everything* he found?

Evidently it is vain to make such appeals to M. Goguel; and for that very reason his defence as a whole, despite its admirable amenity, has no weight for a reasoning student of the myth theory. He is really at the old *à priori* point of view when he concludes by saying that "the historical reality of the personality of Jesus alone enables us to understand the birth and development of Christianity, which otherwise would remain an enigma and, in the proper sense of the word, a miracle." The sufficient answer to such a thesis is that on M. Goguel's view the cults of Yahweh, Zeus, Athênê, Mithra, and Dionysos can never have existed at all, since nobody pretends that those deities were primarily historical personalities.

When, then, a theologian is found claiming in the *Expository Times*, after an avowal of "the persistent evasion of issues by the theologians," that "the views of Drews, W. B. Smith, and J. M. Robertson are *now* generally discredited among competent and serious investigators,"<sup>2</sup> we note the pronouncement as a *brutum fulmen*. The "now" is intended to deceive. No writer who accepted the myth theory would ever have been admitted by

<sup>1</sup> The point has a special interest in connection with the theory that Mark is the adapted gospel of Marcion. See Appendix on *The Problem of Mark*. Marcion would take the anti-Davidic view.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. C. J. Wright, B.D., Penzance, art. on "Some Tendencies and Problems in Modern Theology," *Expository Times*, 1926, p. 154.

the theologian in question to be a "competent and serious investigator"; and the implied suggestion that some such did in the past accept, who now reject, is a *suggestio falsi*. "It is something," this writer goes on, "that the historicity of Jesus is accepted as a settled position among *even* the most 'advanced' historical investigators into the Gospels." The myth-theorist has but to reply that his negators in general are *not* "the most advanced historical investigators," and that Mr. Wright has not shown himself a "competent and serious investigator." He has merely proffered bluster for argument.

The further proposition that "Professor Maurice Goguel of Paris has recently written a book in which he sets forth the reasons why the Protestant Modernist rejects the Christ-myth theory of a few eccentric critics" is of the same vacuous order. The present writer has "set forth the reasons" for describing even the courteous and temperate work of Professor Goguel as a nugatory though a careful performance, based on no adequate study of the myth theory, and amounting in effect only to a re-assertion of the *à priori* claim. That claim is finally seen to be the whole stock-in-trade of Mr. Wright. "*My* second suggestion," he announces, "is that behind Christianity and behind the Gospels there is a great and overwhelming personality of goodness, truth, and beauty"—the vain asseveration which we have heard a hundred times, and which had been far more impressively put by Dr. Burkitt long before Mr. Wright.

After his confident assurance to the readers of the *Expository Times* in 1926 that the myth theory has been "discredited," Mr. Wright has seen fit to contribute to the *Modern Churchman* in 1927 an

article in which he undertakes, all the same, to confute it. Trading mainly on the arguments of Professor Goguel, he makes no attempt to meet the criticisms which have been passed on them, saying nothing of the fact that the *à priori* theory finally relied on by Prof. Goguel is repelled by Professor Van den Bergh van Eysinga: even as he cites anew the performance of Dr. Conybeare without one glance at the rebuttals of that. For such combatants as Mr. Wright, it suffices to state that Dr. Conybeare charged myth theorists with perpetrating "howlers," without specifying them; and without mention of the fact that Dr. Conybeare was guilty of blunders on New Testament matters which would have been discreditable to a Sunday schoolboy.

Beyond wordily reiterating the *à priori* claim, on which he is apparently incapable of reasoning, Mr. Wright contributes to the debate only a reiteration of M. Goguel's argument that the silence of Josephus was perfectly natural, and that it is "*more* embarrassing for the mythologists than for their opponents."<sup>1</sup> If Mr. Wright turns to the work of his ally Dr. Klausner, he will find that scholar explaining<sup>2</sup> that the Jesus tragedy made too small an impression to be remembered; while Professor Burkitt, on the other hand, thinks the testimony of Josephus genuine. The "embarrassment" really does not lie with the mythologists. But when Mr. Wright actually appeals to Anatole France's picture of Pilate as having no recollection of Jesus, he sets us wondering whether he really knows when he is stultifying his own case.

<sup>1</sup> M. Goguel wrote "*perhaps* more embarrassing." Mr. Wright tactfully omits the "perhaps."

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 138.

Even the argument in the *Expository Times* is followed by an admission which unwittingly undermines Mr. Wright's whole case. "I know," he goes on, "that these phrases [as to the necessary Personality] may be used to hide difficulties. But I make this second assertion in order to set forth my own divergence from those who, while accepting the historicity of Jesus, seem to me to make Him a somewhat unimportant figure." That is to say, there are scholars, presumably "competent and serious investigators" (else Mr. Wright would surely dismiss them with one of his facile formulas), who see in the gospels a historical figure which is *not* "a great and overwhelming personality." Then the position that such a personality is required to account for the ecclesiastical evolution is denied not only by the myth-theorists but by some theologians describable as competent and serious investigators. Of what value, then, is the appeal to the consensus of professional theologians?

It is told that Harvey's doctrine of the circulation of the blood was not accepted in his day by any physician over forty. That is, broadly speaking, precisely what was to be expected, especially seeing that Harvey himself took a long time to see the (to us) plain inference from facts which had been established before him. That "Protestant Modernists" should be unable to accept the thesis of the non-historicity of the gospel Jesus is a phenomenon of the same order; and Mr. Wright's inference from it is in the ordinary way of theological paralogism.

The true student will at once recognize, first, that *à priori* asseveration counts for nothing; and, secondly, that it is idle in such a debate to resort to the counting of heads. Galileo was easily non-suited on that simple plan, as he in turn expected

to be. As a matter of fact, there is scholarly testimony to the wide acceptance of the myth theory. Scores of professional notices have admitted the cogency of much of the reasoning of Professors Drews and W. B. Smith; and Professor Van den Bergh van Eysinga ranges himself on the side of his compatriots Pierson, Loman, and Bolland. Twenty years ago Professor Schmiedel of Zurich wrote, in a lecture on 'Jesus in Modern Criticism,' that "for about six years the view that Jesus never really lived has gained an ever-growing number of supporters. It is no use to ignore it, or to frame resolutions against it in meetings of non-theologians."<sup>1</sup> That the number of supporters has greatly increased in these twenty years will hardly be disputed by any educated non-theologian, or even by well-informed theologians.

Yet this proves nothing. In the same period there has probably been a considerable increase in the (proportional) numbers of Spiritualists and believers in "Christian Science," to say nothing of believers in Communism. The question for the serious student is *not* What are the numbers? but What are the arguments? And for the supporters of the myth theory—who are not at one in all their arguments—it is safe to say that they desire no assents save those of students who have weighed both sides of the debate. Their chief difficulty has been to find new antagonists who advance any arguments at all beyond the rhetorical formulas above noticed.

Latterly, however, despite the suggestive abstinence of Mr. C. J. Wright, some arguments have been forthcoming; and one is disposed to say that

<sup>1</sup> Eng. trans. of lecture cited, 1907, pp. 12-13.



they indicate the beginning of the end of the traditionist defence. One of the latest is that put by Dr. J. Warschauer in his 'Historical Life of Christ,'<sup>1</sup> dedicated to Dr. Albert Schweitzer and introduced, though not sponsored, by Professor F. C. Burkitt. Nothing in the whole debate, perhaps, reveals more disastrously the dialectic bankruptcy of the more confident traditionists, who yet presumably pass as "serious and competent investigators." In the forefront of his work Dr. Warschauer thus commits himself:—

"We shall deem it unnecessary to deal with those aberrations of criticism which would seek to reduce the Figure of Jesus Christ to myth or fiction; the absurdity of such attempts is too patent to need refutation. We would merely remind the reader that, even had none of the Gospels come down to us, we should have *irrefragable and detailed testimony* to the historical Jesus in the Letters of the Apostle Paul, written in the fifth and sixth decades of the first century by one who was closely acquainted with men who had themselves been on terms of personal intimacy with our Lord. From these Epistles alone we should have learned that a mighty Personage of the name of Jesus, many of whose disciples still survived (I Cor. xv, 6), had recently been exercising a remarkable activity in Palestine; that among his many followers there had been an inner circle of twelve (*ib.* verse 5), some of whom he names (Gal. ii, 8, 9) as personally known to him, as was also one of the Lord's brothers, James, who occupied a leading position in the early church (Gal. i, 19; ii, 9), having *joined the circle of the Apostles*; that this community believed Jesus to be the Messiah or Christ..... that His disciples were *convinced* that he had manifested Himself to them repeatedly after his death (*ib.* xv, 5-8); and that his return was anticipated by them in the near future, on the authority of his own promises (I Thess. iv, 15-17). The Pauline Epistles are sufficient, and more than sufficient, to dispose of the so-called 'Christ-myth.'"

Let it be observed that Paul is here cited as proving the *historicity* of Jesus by a testimony to

<sup>1</sup> Fisher Unwin Ltd. (Ernest Benn Ltd.), 1927.