

# The Princeton Theological Review

JULY, 1914

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GENESIS \*

Our study of Genesis is purely homiletic. Questions of higher and lower criticism, of text and unity and authorship, do not concern us here. It is our purpose simply to inquire how the book as it lies before us may be studied in the closet and treated in the pulpit, and how the truth which it is designed to teach may be most clearly and effectively presented.

Genesis means beginning. The origin of all things is here disclosed—the heavens and the earth, man, sin, salvation, arts, industries, society, government, civilization, the church.

Genesis portrays the beginning as the Revelation portrays the end of all things. One unveils the eternal past, the other the eternal future. Scripture opens and closes with the vision of paradise. Here is the earthly paradise, soon forfeited by sin; here is the heavenly paradise, the home of the children of God, from which they shall go out no more forever. Here is man created, fallen; here is man redeemed, restored. Here is God the Creator, with the world in rebellion against Him; here is God the Redeemer, with the universe prostrate at His feet. Here the divine purpose is declared, the divine promises are given; here purpose and promises are fulfilled.

The account of the creation is not scientific but pictorial. So far as we can see, this is the only way in which the story could be told so as to convey essential truth, and at the same time be understood by men of every age. If it had been written in terms of modern science, it would have

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\* A lecture delivered at the Princeton Seminary Summer School of Theology on June 3, 1914.

## GOSPEL HISTORY AND CRITICISM\*

The four Gospels contained in the New Testament are the primary literary sources of our knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Other sources, whether Christian, pagan or Jewish, add little or nothing that is authentic. The rest of the New Testament either by what it presupposes or by express allusion agrees with the Gospels in respect both of the factual basis of Christian faith and of its significance. The Gospels however are historical narratives, biographical in form. Except the Acts of the Apostles, which is also historical in form and in a measure biographical, the remaining books of the New Testament are epistles or letters devoted to the exposition of Christian doctrine and to practical admonitions; and there is one prophetic writing. The fundamental agreement of these elements is an important fact, the historical implications of which are worthy of careful analysis.

The nature of this agreement concerns matters which separate the canonical Gospels from other representatives of their type. The Jesus of the New Testament lived the life of a normal man, free from pathological conditions whether of mind or body. Those elements of His person which distinguish Him from other men do not impair this quality. He lived among men the life of a man and did not cease to be man though free from any consciousness of sin, for this is an exception not to the type but to its condition. There is no trace of sin in Jesus; yet in His life and teaching the fact of sin in human experience, its effects upon man in the present and in the future is recognized and made the subject of His earnest concern. His sinlessness is not the innocence of ignorance but the purity of holiness—that quality of nature which is the accompaniment of its positive determination to good. Yet sinless and holy, Jesus lived among men sinful by nature and subject to the consequences

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\* The substance of lectures delivered in the Princeton Summer School of Theology in June, 1913. Part I.

of sin. And He did this fully conscious of the conditions which surrounded Him. His reaction upon them must therefore have singular significance for the interpretation of His life. This did not manifest itself in isolation. Jesus was not a holy ascetic. It did not exhaust itself in righteous indignation and prophetic denunciation or in the milder tones of moral precept. The Gospels disclose two distinctive elements in Jesus' attitude toward sin: sympathy with sinful men, and the exercise of authority over sin itself. These qualities moreover find expression in a life consciously devoted to the discharge of a definite function. This function the Gospels describe in terms of a religious expectation which had its roots in the Old Testament and its more immediate expression in the prophetic activity of John the Baptist. This expectation had as its content an era of blessing from God to men and as its mediator the anointed of the Lord, the Messiah. The ground of this expectation was the sense of the relation between God and the Jewish people during their history, quickened and informed from time to time by prophetic utterances. This relation was believed to rest ultimately on a covenant graciously made by God with the people. The covenant took the form of a promise of blessing from God and on the part of the people of life under law in conscious subjection to the will of God. Traces are not wanting moreover that this covenant presupposes and is but a more particular form of an earlier covenant of wider scope with promise of good to the human race and that it emerged historically as a means to this larger end.

The Gospels represent Jesus as consciously undertaking and in all His activity fulfilling the function of the Messiah. His life therefore, itself free from sin but in close relation with sinners and with sin, is set forth in terms of a religious expectation fraught historically with profound meaning both for the Jewish people and for mankind. It is purposive in a twofold sense, in that it stands related to this expectation and implicates a philosophy of history

which to providence adds a gracious activity of God on man's behalf; and in that it was directed consciously toward the realization of the end which the expectation involved. Jesus' life as Messiah is thus set upon a background which involves the revealing activity and the gracious purpose of God. The former is regulative and gives knowledge of the content of the latter which is made effectual in and through Jesus. This activity moreover has in addition to its present significance an explicit reference to the future and moves toward an end in which the final issues of the present order, the world and all its values, are to be determined.

The same sources which tell of the normal human life of Jesus and of His vocational consciousness attribute to Him a unique origin, a sense of peculiar and intimate relation to God, the possession and exercise of superhuman knowledge, power and authority, and an issue of His life in contravention of the processes which usually follow death. In different forms but clearly and unmistakably the New Testament writings witness to the deity of Jesus and represent His life upon earth as a real incarnation of a preëxistent and divine person, as being part of and taken up into the experience of an infinite and eternal person.

These three things,—a normal human life, a definite vocational consciousness and a divine nature in personal union with the human—constitute the essential elements in the New Testament portraiture of the person of Jesus. The account which is given of His life however centers about and is controlled by its vocational end. The final cause of the incarnation is the purpose which Jesus set before Himself in His vocational consciousness, and the means to the realization of this end His passion. This appears in the early reference to His passion, in the central place assigned to it in the Apostolic gospel, in the prophetic anticipation of it by Jesus, and in the full and detailed account of it in the Gospels. Its significance is definitely indicated before it occurred and is afterwards expounded.

In the discharge of His vocation Jesus lived the life of a religious teacher and inculcated the truths concerning God and man and their mutual relation, especially in the ethico-religious or spiritual sphere, which disclose His conception both of the ultimate values of life and of the nature of the work He was seeking to accomplish. He was a prophet with a message. But His message like His life and His death was a means to an end; and this was realized in bringing men into relation with Himself. For His vocation was fundamentally that of a saviour; and this He fulfilled not simply in what He was or in what He taught or even in what He did, but in Himself in all the fulness of His life and work, so that they truly are saved from sin and its power whom Jesus saves unto God and His favor.

The Gospel story is the story of a saviour who came out of the infinite world, who lived as man among men under the conditions of time and space, whose vocation as saviour concerned the ultimate realities, the supreme values of life, the timeless and eternal which is constituted for man by his relation to God, who in the discharge of this function passed through the mystery of the passion and entered again the eternal world as the all powerful, ever present Lord, the source of life to men, the object with God Himself of the faith and worship of those who through Him and in Him are made partakers of the salvation which He accomplished—members of the kingdom of God, possessors and heirs of its blessings in time and in eternity. The Gospel story, in short, tells of the origin of the Christian religion in the life and work of a divine saviour under conditions of time and space in which timeless and eternal relations and values were established by Jesus. Its distinctive quality consists in the combination of the historical and the eternal. It implicates the supernatural not simply in its message about God but specifically in its account of the person and work of Jesus. And the record of this, the historical setting of Jesus' life,—His teaching, His works, His death, the final issue in the resurrection and exaltation—is set forth in the

Gospels. In the Epistles as in the Apostolic preaching the significance of Jesus' person and work for the spiritual welfare of men and the means by which and the processes through which His work becomes effectual are unfolded. The substantial agreement of the two records shows plainly that the essential elements of the Gospel portraiture of Jesus entered into the faith of the primitive Christian community and gave its distinctive character to the Christian religion.

But all this was long ago and the story of it has been transmitted in a process which has deeply influenced and at times itself been strongly affected by the forces which have determined the development and character of Western civilization and culture. It still possesses profound interest and supreme value if true. What are the tests of its truth? Ultimately its correspondence with reality. But how may this be determined? One test, but not the only test, is that of criticism. For the record of this story is preserved in documents—the Gospels—and these may be subjected to the methods and principles by which other historical documents are tested in respect of their origin and character. There are other tests based on the causal judgment, historical continuity, personal experience. A final judgment will embrace them all; but each may be treated separately and attain reasonably secure results in its own sphere.

#### CRITICISM

The introductory discussion will have served sufficiently to indicate the character of Gospel history, to show how deeply the supernatural is involved in it, to make evident what far reaching and profound issues depend upon its truthfulness, and to point out the important place which criticism holds among the tests by which this may be determined.

Criticism of historical documents is broadly divided into two spheres, the lower or textual, and the higher or literary and historical.

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Textual criticism is concerned with the text of a document; and in the case of the Gospels whose text has been transmitted by the process of copying its object is the establishment of a text approximating as closely as possible the text of the autographs. To this end it gathers the available materials, the manuscripts, the versions, and the patristic citations; it ascertains, compares, analyses and organizes the phenomena, formulates principles for estimating their relative value, reconstructs the history of the text in the various stages and forms of its transmission, and finally produces a text. The results of this process are embodied in the great critical texts of the New Testament, especially in the texts of Tischendorf, of Westcott and Hort, and of von Soden.

Recent work in this field has not yet resulted in any essential modification of Westcott and Hort's theory of the history of the text. Their view has indeed been subjected to thorough testing in all its elements, but it has stood the testing well. Their theory still remains the best account of the history of the text, their principles have commended themselves as sound, and their text is still the best critical text of the New Testament. The comprehensive work of von Soden has just been completed,<sup>1</sup> but it will be some time before its value can be accurately ascertained.<sup>2</sup> Von Soden's analysis of the history of the text—based on a larger array of evidence, especially in the sphere of the later manuscripts, and better editions of some of the versions and patristic writers—shows nevertheless a fairly close approximation to Westcott and Hort's theory in its broader features. It differs chiefly perhaps in its account

<sup>1</sup> *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 1902-1913. The fourth volume contains the text and critical apparatus. The text has also been issued with a condensed apparatus—*Griechisches Neues Testament. Text mit kurzem Apparat (Handausgabe)* 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bousset, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1903, 324 ff.; 1907, 69 ff.; 1908, 672 ff.; *Theologische Rundschau*, 1903, 431 ff.; 1908, 380 ff.; 1914, 143 ff., Lietzmann, *Zeitschrift f. d. Neutest. Wissenschaft*, 1907, 34 ff., Lagrange, *Revue Biblique*, 1913, 481 ff.

of the origin of the Western text, in emphasizing the Egyptian provenience of the Neutral text and its derivation from a critical recension, and finally in allowing a place to all the different forms of the text in reconstructing the original text.

Beside critical investigation of the available materials, discovery has made its contributions in this sphere. The Washington manuscript, purchased by Mr. Freer of Detroit in Cairo on December 19, 1906, has just been issued in facsimile<sup>3</sup> together with a critical study of its text by Henry A. Sanders.<sup>4</sup> The manuscript is old—of the fourth or fifth century—and contains the four Gospels with some breaks<sup>5</sup> and in the Western order—Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. The most striking feature of its text was observed soon after its purchase and has been widely discussed. The text of the Gospel of Mark is unique in that it alone of the manuscripts of the Gospels contains an addition to the long ending of this Gospel hitherto known to have formed part of its text in some early manuscripts only from a statement of Jerome's.<sup>6</sup> The addition however does not strengthen but rather weakens the argument for the genuineness of this ending.

Other discoveries have contributed indirectly to the work of textual criticism. The papyri and ostraca from Egypt and Greek inscriptions from countries around the Mediterranean have increased our knowledge of the *Κοινή*, or that

<sup>3</sup> *Facsimile of the Washington Manuscript of the Four Gospels in the Freer Collection*, 1912.

<sup>4</sup> *The New Testament Manuscripts in the Freer Collection, Part i, The Washington Manuscript of the Four Gospels*, 1912. The manuscript has been collated with the Oxford 1880 edition of the *Textus Receptus* by Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp. 143 ff., and with the text of Westcott and Hort by Goodspeed in the *American Journal of Theology*, 1913 (xvii), pp. 395 ff., 599 ff., and 1914 (xviii), pp. 131 ff., 266 ff.

<sup>5</sup> The two lacunae caused by loss of leaves are Jn. xiv. 25b-xvi. 7a; Mk. xv. 13-38a; cf. Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> *C. Pelag.* ii. 15 (Vall. ii. 758): in quibusdam exemplaribus et maxime in graecis codicibus iuxta Marcum in fine eius evangelii scribitur postea, quum accubuissent undecim, etc.



form of the Greek language which was commonly spoken and written in the Graeco-Roman world from the time of Alexander until about the fifth century after Christ. This has not merely taught us to estimate more truly the historical continuity of the Greek language; it has enlarged also our understanding of the lexical and syntactical phenomena of the New Testament. The results of these discoveries have been gathered and organized by Deissmann,<sup>7</sup> Thumb,<sup>8</sup> Moulton,<sup>9</sup> Milligan,<sup>10</sup> and others,<sup>11</sup> and are of great value especially when supplemented by the work that has been done on the grammar of the Septuagint by Helbing<sup>12</sup> and Thackeray<sup>13</sup> and by the contributions of those who, like Dalman,<sup>14</sup> Wellhausen<sup>15</sup> and Zahn,<sup>16</sup> approach the study of the language of the New Testament from its Aramaic background. The significance of these linguistic phenomena is both general and particular. It increases the accuracy of our knowledge of the forms of the language in which the New Testament was written; and then in the papyri contemporary documents have been preserved from the time of the autographs and through the following centuries in which the New Testament manuscripts were written. By a comparison of the forms preserved in the papyri and the inscriptions with the forms found in the manuscripts—especially in matters of orthography—light may be thrown on the local origin of a manuscript or a type of the text.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Bibelstudien*, 1895; *Neue Bibelstudien*, 1897; *Bible Studies*, 1901; *Licht vom Osten*, 1909; *Light from the Ancient East*, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> *Die griechische Sprache im Zeitalter d. Hellenismus*, 1901.

<sup>9</sup> *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 1906.

<sup>10</sup> "Lexical Notes from the Papyri" (in collaboration with Moulton) in the *Expositor* since 1908; *St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 1908; *Selections from the Greek Papyri*, 1910.

<sup>11</sup> Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka*, 1899; *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, since 1901; Mitteis-Wilcken, *Papyrusurkunde*, 1912.

<sup>12</sup> *Grammatik der Septuaginta*, 1907.

<sup>13</sup> *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek*, 1909.

<sup>14</sup> *Die Worte Jesu*, 1899.

<sup>15</sup> *Einleitung in d. drei ersten Evangelien*,<sup>2</sup> 1911.

<sup>16</sup> *Einleitung i. d. Neue Testament*,<sup>3</sup> 1906.

<sup>17</sup> Moulton, *op cit.*, p. 41, says: "Another field for research is pre-

## HIGHER CRITICISM

Higher criticism of the Gospels is of two kinds, literary and historical. Both presuppose and build upon the results of textual criticism as this in turn presupposes knowledge of the language in which the Gospels were written. The two are in reality simply two methods of study. The literary criticism treats of the literary form of each Gospel both in itself and in its relation to the form of the other Gospels with a view to understanding its literary character and discovering as far as possible its literary genesis, i.e. its sources. Historical criticism seeks to understand the Gospels in the light of the environment in which each was written and ultimately to judge of their historical trustworthiness. The two methods are distinct and each is guided by its own principles. But the latter not infrequently presupposes and makes use of the results of the former. The final decision toward which the whole critical process moves is made in this sphere, not in isolation but comprehensively, and its principles must be adequate to its function. These may be a priori, having their origin and justification in some theory of truth—in a philosophy; or they may be a posteriori, springing from and grounded in historical evidence. As a matter of fact, to prove sufficient for their task, they must and do combine both elements. And as there can be no historical criticism—or no solution of its final problem—which is uninfluenced by a priori principles, the results in this sphere of criticism must be understood and estimated in the light of the theoretical principles which underly them. Coming as these do from an ultimate theory of truth, or in the historical sphere from an ultimate philosophy of history, they necessarily reflect an attitude of thought—a disposition or predisposition—which influences the judgment in the decision which is reached

sent by the orthographical peculiarities of the NT uncials, which, in comparison with the papyri and inscriptions, will help to fix the provenance of the MSS, and thus supply criteria for that localizing of textual types which is an indispensable step towards the ultimate goal of criticism.”

concerning the historical problems of the Gospels. The most fundamental of these problems concerns the transcendent or supernatural element in history to which the Gospels bear witness. If the principle or standard by which the historical trustworthiness of the Gospels is judged be naturalistic in the sense of eliminating the possibility of the supernatural in history on theoretical grounds—to whatever general theory this may be related, whether materialistic or idealistic in its absolutist or pluralistic forms—the final judgment must be negative and the Gospels be held either partially trustworthy or completely untrustworthy. *Tertium non datur*. But if the principle be supernaturalistic in the sense of allowing the possibility of the supernatural or the miraculous in history, the judgment may be positive. *Tertium datur*.

There was a time when the former alternative in this issue of principle was considered axiomatic in much of the historical criticism of the Gospels and was made the boast of those who called their method scientific and claimed freedom from presuppositions.<sup>18</sup> Then there came a reaction, emotionalistic rather than logical, which granted the premise but sought escape from the conclusion by a theory of religious values in which the substance or essence of the Gospel—the ethico-spiritual teaching of Jesus—was separated from its incidental and formal supernaturalism.<sup>19</sup> But signs are not wanting that the real significance of the alternative is finding recognition. The naturalistic premise is not so readily taken for granted as an axiom requiring no defense. In fact it is sometimes denied and the validity of the supernatural premise affirmed by those who show little appreciation of its implications.<sup>20</sup> Others have dis-

<sup>18</sup> So generally by the representatives of the Tübingen school.

<sup>19</sup> In the Ritschlian school.

<sup>20</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encyclopedia Biblica*, "Resurrection- and Ascension-Narratives," iv. 4040: "The present examination of the subject will not start from the proposition that 'miracles are impossible'.

Such a proposition rests upon a theory of the universe (*Weltanschauung*), not upon exhaustive examination of all the events which

cussed it in its religious and philosophical aspects, and Bousset<sup>21</sup> in particular has done an important thing—whatever may be thought of his own theory—in calling attention to the necessary emergence of the issue in the development of criticism and to its crucial significance for the solution

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may be spoken of as miracles. Even should we by any chance find ourselves in a position to say that every alleged miraculous occurrence from the beginning of time down to the present hour had been duly examined and found non-miraculous, we should not thereby be secured against the possibility of something occurring to-morrow which we should be compelled to recognize as a miracle. Empirically, only so much as this stands fast—and no more—that as regards present-day occurrences the persons who reckon with the possibility of a miracle (by miracle we here throughout understand an occurrence that unquestionably is against natural law) are very few, and that present-day occurrences which are represented as miraculous are on closer examination invariably found to possess no such character.

The normal procedure of the historian accordingly in dealing with the events of the past will be in the first instance to try whether a non-miraculous explanation will serve, and to come to the other conclusion only on the strength of quite unexceptionable testimony. Needless to say, in doing so, he must be free from all prepossession. He must accordingly, where biblical authors are concerned, in the first instance, look at their statements in the light of their own presuppositions, even though in the end he may find himself shut up to the conclusion that not only the statements but also the presuppositions are erroneous."

<sup>21</sup> *Theologische Rundschau*, 1909, pp. 419 ff., 471 ff.: "The answer to the question concerning the a priori of all religion in the spiritual life of man is also the justification of religion and in its totality belongs to the sphere of purely philosophical investigation from which finally all simply empirical-historical elements must be excluded" (p. 435). And again: "But this will remain, as Troeltsch rightly perceived, the fundamental problem of our present theology (Systematik), the question concerning the religious a priori and its grounding in the totality of the reason. Thus Otto rightly grasped and estimated the situation: 'We seek to-day again on all sides for the religious a priori. Supernaturalism and Historicism fail to supply the standard and principle of the true in religion. The history of religions increases amazingly (wächst ins Ungeheure). But how can mere description of religions become a science of religion when it remains a history of religions. In fact how can it become even a history of religion unless it first possesses in itself, if only dimly perceived, a principle by which the historical material is selected, not to say, organized.' Cf. *Biblical and Theological Studies*, 1912, p. 312, n. 13.

of the ultimate problem of historical criticism and the further progress of its work. Strikingly enough and with genuine insight into the character of the issue he entitled his discussion "the religious a priori"; for the problem is broader than the historical criticism of the Gospels. It is broader than Christianity; for it concerns the validity of religion and of the religious view of the world. It is bound up with the issues of theism—the reality and character of God and His relation to the world. As God is the object of true religion, religion itself on its subjective side will have one or another meaning, one or another value, as this issue is decided.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The influence of the naturalistic principle upon history especially in the religious sphere and with particular reference to Christianity, by which the supernatural is excluded as a cause in the origin and consequently from any part in the explanation which history as a science gives or can give of it as of all other religions, may be seen in writers who differ widely in their interpretation both of Christianity itself and of its constituent factors. Loofs (*What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?*, 1913, pp. 83 f.) says: "Thus, historical science is often in a position to recognize a fact upon contemporary evidence, although it is not known by what it was caused. If there is a possible cause to be presumed, our ignorance regarding this cause does not matter. But where we cannot find any cause which, according to our experience, is possible, then every conscientious historian is prevented from speaking of a historical fact. Hence when historians are forced by credible reports to recognize a fact as having really occurred, they must assume causes lying within the sphere of our experience. From this it follows that historical science, when investigating the life of Jesus, must take into consideration the supposition that it was a purely human life and that nothing happened in it which falls outside the sphere of human experience. Giving up this supposition would mean that the life of Jesus, or this or that event of his life, is incommensurable for historical science. . . . No description of the life of Jesus that recognizes supernatural factors is purely historical. An author treating his subject in some chapters as a historian would do, but elsewhere emancipating himself from the analogy of human experience, will produce a mixture of history and assertions of faith. . . . Every one who undertakes the task of writing a life of Jesus comparable to historical biographies and, like these, requiring scientific consent of the reader, is forced to suppose that his life was a purely human one. If, on the contrary, the life of Jesus cannot be understood as a purely human one, then historical science may give from its sources evidence to this or that of the doings or

The philosophical aspects of the ultimate problem which this issue involves have been set forth by James Ward in

sufferings or sayings of Jesus, but to do full justice to his person is beyond its limits." This manifestly erects the analogy of human experience into a test of the possible in the realm of historical science although reserving for faith a sphere of the real in history but beyond the principles and bounds of historical science. J. Weiss is equally explicit about the limits of historical science. He says (*Archiv. für Religionswissenschaft*, 1913 (xvi), pp. 425 f.): "Its task [i.e., the task of historical science—die Geschichtswissenschaft] will always remain, to show that the later manifestation is the necessary result of its antecedent and the fruit of its environment. . . . As investigation [Forschung] and in its detailed study, it must be indifferent not only toward the idea that possibly supernatural revelation may have introduced a new beginning but also toward the more modern conception that an unaccountable factor may be present in the emergence of a unique personality [Individualität]. It will attempt, in one way or another, to coördinate in the totality of causal relations also the original; it would deny itself as science if it should stop short of this." Even more explicitly and with perception of its implications Maurenbrecher states the same limiting principle. He says (*Von Nazareth nach Golgotha*, 1909, pp. 13 f.): "Our entire scientific work is directed toward this end, to understand the process of development purely from within [rein aus sich selbst heraus], to avoid every kind of supersensible causality. Modern psychology recognizes no supersensible influences under which man's consciousness stands; it recognizes only the natural and regular interrelations of this consciousness itself. For it religion also is only an immanent part of man's historical development, which has become and was not made, which grew and was not given. Religious impulses like others do not develop otherwise than according to the general laws which underlie all spiritual growth. They arise from pre-religious motives and emerge within the religious development from lower to higher forms. At no point of the development have we the right to suppose extra-human, supersensible powers to have been active in the religious conceptions and feelings of mankind. Rather is it everywhere the task of a psychologically informed exposition of the history of religion to show the natural and regular development in which the higher forms of religion sprang out of the precedent lower forms by means of purely human, intra-historical powers. As to every other form of religion so also to Christianity the psychologically schooled interpretation [Betrachtung] dare apply no other standard. As everywhere [else], so also here we must seek to understand the creations of history as those of the individual consciousness solely by means of common human motives and in relation to other manifestations of religious development. Every conception of a supersensible cause of religious feeling or of a supernatural origin of a particular historical form of religion is, over against the psychologically [inter-

his recent Gifford lectures.<sup>23</sup> Its wide range and the significance of its negative or agnostic solution are vividly portrayed in a striking passage at the conclusion of the introduction to Miss Jane E. Harrison's brilliant and—so it appears to one who has knowledge of the subject—incautiously speculative study in the social origins of the Greek religion.<sup>24</sup>

preted] development of the history of religion, hopelessly lost. It is nothing other than a more refined form of the myth which on its lower levels dominates the whole thought of religion and whose nature consists in this, that beside the grounds in consciousness itself for that [*i.e.*, the religious] feeling or conception in man it seeks other causes which belong to an external miraculous and magical world. To strip off this mythical manner of thought [Denkweise] and to interpret the human consciousness purely from within [ganz aus sich selbst heraus] is just the task imposed upon a scientific interpretation of the history of religion. . . (p. 17). When we cease considering it [die Religion] what it claims to be in accordance with its own mythical manner of thought, there will cease also the narrowness of the judgment which regards the one religion as true and all others as false. Rather all religions which have been at all influential in history are proven false; for each operates with objects which in reality simply do not exist [einfach nicht da sind]. Yet, on the other hand, when differently viewed each religion was true; for each is a part of the striving of mankind for the meaning and value of life, for selfrespect and human worth." Still Maurenbrecher himself insists (p. 22) that there is reason enough in the fatal neglect of the information contained in the only sources of our knowledge of the beginnings of Christianity—the Christian tradition embodied in the New Testament—without which, and in the event of its proving untrustworthy, nothing that is capable of proof can be known, to suggest the need both of caution in regard to this preliminary question [concerning the trustworthiness of the Christian tradition] and of not prejudging it on the basis of certain general judgments.

<sup>23</sup> *The Realm of Ends or Pluralism and Theism*, 1911.

<sup>24</sup> *Themis. A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, 1912, pp. xviii f. Cf., Farnell, *Hibbert Journal*, 1913 (xi), p. 453: "The task of *Themis* is to apply the theories of these distinguished thinkers [*i.e.*, Bergson, Durkheim, Hubert, Maus, Marett] to the minutiae of Greek religion and mythology with a boldness of imagination that might often dismay their authors, as the audacity of the pupil is sometimes an embarrassment to the teacher. . . . What first impresses one in this singular treatise is the extraordinary dogmatism of the tone. Miss Harrison possesses a creditable amount of learning; but no scholar in Europe possesses enough to be allowed so much dogmatism unchallenged."

I have come to see in the religious impulse a new value. It is, I believe, an attempt, instinctive and unconscious, to do what Professor Bergson bids modern philosophy do consciously and with the whole apparatus of science behind it, namely to apprehend life as one, as indivisible, yet as perennial movement and change. But, profoundly as I also feel the value of the religious impulse, so keenly do I feel the danger and almost necessary disaster of each and every creed and dogma. For the material of religion is essentially the uncharted, the ungrasped, as Herbert Spencer would say, though with a somewhat different connotation, the unknowable. Further, every religious dogma errs in two ways. First, it is a confident statement about something unknown and therefore practically always untrustworthy; secondly, if it were right and based on real knowledge, then its subject-matter would no longer belong to the realm of religion; it would belong to science or philosophy. To win new realms of knowledge out of the unknown is part of the normal current of human effort; but to force intellectual dogma upon material which belongs only to the realm of dim aspiration is to steer for a backwater of death. In that backwater lies stranded many an ancient galley, haunted by fair figures of serene Olympians, and even, it must be said, by the phantom of Him—the Desire of all nations—who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. The stream of life flows on, a saecular mystery; but these, the *idola* of man's market-place, are dead men, hollow ghosts.

A theistic view of the world—a belief in God—will not of itself solve the fundamental problem of Gospel criticism; but this view—and this alone—permits of an affirmative judgment. On any hypothesis or belief in respect of this ultimate issue, however, the historical evidence for the trustworthiness of the Gospels, in its various forms, must be investigated and its value determined; and this is the primary function of historical criticism. In discharging it, there is need of minute accuracy, detailed consideration of the different phenomena, and a clear and comprehensive exhibition of the facts with a view to their organization under some unifying principle. This preliminary work should be accomplished in a purely objective manner. But as every science has need of working hypotheses, so historical criticism brings to its investigation of the Gospels an interpretative theory which in practice seldom escapes the influence of the choice of alternatives involved in the ultimate issue concerning the supernatural. Being the reaction



of mind upon certain phenomena, it is generally purposive; and knowledge of the end toward which the investigation moves<sup>25</sup> may affect its results even in the preliminary statement of fact. It should, however, be possible to keep the two things separate or at least to recognize and discount the influence of the issue of principle in the phenomenal or factual sphere while freely admitting and indeed maintaining that this issue is and must be determining in the ultimate appreciation or evaluation of the facts, in their explanation and in the final estimate of their significance.

### THE GENETIC PROBLEM

The preliminary work of historical criticism in the phenomenal sphere is essentially genetic. The original or approximately original text of the Gospels being given by the lower criticism and the content of the Gospels being known, it is the function of historical criticism to investigate the origin both of the Gospels and of their content in respect of its formal and of its material aspects. In doing this it makes use of the results of the literary criticism in so far as these may be well grounded. It makes inquiry also concerning the historical background of the Gospels in the matter of place, time, life, thought, institutions and persons mentioned in or presupposed by them. It investigates severally the evidence for their authorship, date, place of writing, purpose, original language, readers and general characteristics by careful consideration of the available evidence whether from early tradition or internal indications. The Gospels moreover are representatives of a type of literature and their relation not only one to another but to other representatives of the same type must be determined.

When this work has been done and the conclusions reached which the evidence seems to justify, criticism is

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Gunkel, *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments*, 1903, p. 70: "Thus these parallels supply us with the final proof that the infancy history of Jesus is a legend, of which indeed we were already long ago convinced (wovon wir freilich schon lange vorher überzeugt waren)."

ready to raise the final genetic question,—the question of cause, which of necessity passes beyond the phenomenal sphere of facts about the Gospels into the sphere of explanation of the Gospels as literary facts, the sphere in which judgment is passed on their trustworthiness or truth. And the content of the Gospels being what it is and including the supernatural, the solution of this question must be made in relation to the fundamental issue of principle. If the causal explanation of the content of the Gospels be a reality corresponding to their narrative, the literary embodiment of this will have a sufficient explanation and the judgment of trustworthiness may be justified. But if this be not the case, the solution of the genetic problem must be sought in some theory of the origin of the content of the Gospels under influences which were creative rather than reproductive in relation to the factual basis upon which they rest. And if this be the judgment of historical criticism, the Gospels cannot be trustworthy in the high sense of being consistently truthful; they can only be either partially trustworthy or completely untrustworthy.

The well assured results of historical criticism in the phenomenal sphere make the hypothesis of complete untrustworthiness unreasonable. Only two theories are really possible,—entire truthfulness or partial trustworthiness. The latter may approximate the merely logical possibility of entire untrustworthiness; but the evidence for certain historical elements in the Gospels can be set aside only by an historical skepticism which equally invalidates all knowledge of the past.

These being the alternatives, the genetic problem presses with peculiar force on the partial theory; for, in addition to the necessity which it shares with the opposing view of accounting for the genesis of the Gospels as literary facts, it must separate, in the matter of content, the trustworthy from the untrustworthy elements and adequately ground its principle of separation. And it must also discover the forces and indicate the processes which were operative in

the production of the untrustworthy element. This in particular requires explanation since on this theory it has no basis in fact. It is a difficult task; but it is necessary to the consistency of the partial theory. Its importance has long been recognized, but the efforts to meet it have not yet attained any considerable degree of success. Strauss sought to solve it by means of his mythical theory; but there are few if any representatives of the partial theory to-day who would defend this view in its entirety or adopt the results of Strauss' application of it to the Gospels. Confident as he was of the validity of his theory, Strauss did not fail to see the difficulties which attended its results. His insight has been justified by later efforts and newer theories so that his statement is still true of the partial theories generally.<sup>26</sup>

The boundary line, however, between the historical and the unhistorical in records, in which as in our Gospels this latter element is incorporated, will ever remain fluctuating and unsusceptible of precise attainment. Least of all can it be expected that the first comprehensive attempt to treat these records from a critical point of view should be successful in drawing a sharply defined line of demarcation. In the obscurity which criticism has produced, by the extinction of all lights hitherto held historical, the eye must accustom itself by degrees to discriminate objects with precision; and at all events the author of this work wishes especially to guard himself in those places where he declares he knows not what happened from the imputation of asserting that he knows that nothing happened.

A similar appreciation of the difficulties that confront the partial theory appears in a recent brochure of Johannes Weiss'.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *The Life of Jesus* (translated by George Eliot), 1906, pp. 91 f.

<sup>27</sup> *Jesus von Nazareth Mythos oder Geschichte?* 1910; pp. 114 ff. Loofs also, speaking of the miracles recorded in the Gospels, says (*op. cit.*, p. 127): "Exaggeration, insufficient acquaintance with the so-called natural laws, and wrong interpretation of metaphorical language undoubtedly helped to form our tradition. But we cannot clearly mark off the share they had in it and separate what is credible from what is incredible." W. Haupt, discussing the Gospel tradition of the words of Jesus, says (*Worte Jesu und Gemeindeüberlieferung*, 1913, p. 168). "It is false to picture the tradition as a mechanical,

The tradition with which we have to do is indeed—and that is the difficulty—anything else but a dry historical narrative about ordinary, daily occurrences. It is, even in its most primitive elements, penetrated with the miraculous; from the baptism of Jesus to the empty grave (Mk), not to say from the supernatural birth to the breaking of the seals of the tomb (Mt), what occurs naturally is interwoven with a series of miracles. And we still stand to-day, as in the days of [the old controversy between] supernaturalism and rationalism [i.e. the stage of historical criticism prior to Strauss] before the question: how are these two elements related to each other? This is the question of questions: is the supernatural only a stratum loosely superimposed and easily removed, or is it bed-rock? In other words, has a story not indeed commonplace but heroic been heightened into the divine, being gradually covered by legend with miracle growths? Or is it originally a history of the gods which, in order that it might be made convincing and credible, has been given the necessary setting in space and time and a measurably historical embodiment? . . . Of what avail is it to separate the earlier from the later strata, since the miraculous, though moderated, still reaches into the very earliest stratum? . . . There is, so it seems, no choice for one who does not occupy the standpoint of supernaturalism. These stories together with their entire setting must be rejected as legendary or recourse must be had to naturalistic explanation. . . . It is however too simple a solution to reject the setting because of the miracle. A solution must be found in which the non-miraculous traits will receive just treatment. To many this seems impossible. . . . But he who has the duty of really interpreting the sources cannot rest satisfied with this.

Weiss himself takes refuge in the naturalistic interpretation of Paulus. The Gospel narratives of miracles in many instances have their origin in misunderstood natural phenomena. But he supplements this theory especially in

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extremely accurate reproduction of carefully guarded words of Jesus. Rather these lived only in so far as they touched the important and burning questions of the community. Where however such contact existed, where a word of Jesus was of significance for the questions of the community, there it became not so much dead capital but like a shoot that puts forth buds; it was enlarged, new thoughts derived from it, new regions illumined by it. And what the community, under the impression of an original word of Jesus, thus won in new insight, this circulated frequently again as a word of Jesus. The boundary between the original possession and the new acquisition was fluctuating; and even then it was often no longer possible to separate the original from the later accretion."

the matter of Jesus' healing activity by the help of modern psychology. He concludes, after illustrating his method:<sup>28</sup>

But all these attempts proceed on the assumption that the Gospel tradition is rooted in history, that it grew in the soil of the history of Jesus, that it goes back to the eye-witnesses of the life of Jesus and is chronologically so near it that historical reminiscences may be reckoned with.

The "line of demarcation between the historical and the unhistorical" in the Gospels can, as Strauss said, be drawn only with difficulty and with little precision. The separation of the trustworthy from the untrustworthy elements cannot be made on purely literary grounds if the miraculous be untrustworthy—for this extends back into the earliest sources—or on purely historical grounds if only the miraculous is untrustworthy—for the evidence is the same as that which accredits the non-miraculous. For "one who does not occupy the standpoint of supernaturalism" there seem to be but two alternatives; complete rejection of the natural with the supernatural elements, or acceptance of the natural and a historically arbitrary rejection of the supernatural or the equivalent—a naturalistic interpretation of it. The evidence from the phenomenal sphere of historical criticism seems to Weiss to require the choice of the latter. The issue of principle, however, remains. But Weiss like Strauss—though probably for different reasons, as Strauss is explicit in grounding his point of view upon the Hegelian philosophy—has chosen the negative and is shut up to the partial theory.

There are then these three views which may be designated the positive, the partial, and the negative or—as they are sometimes called—the conservative or traditional, the liberal, and the radical. The fundamental issue between the positive on the one hand and the partial and negative on the other is the supernatural; that between the partial and the negative is the purely natural elements in the Gospels, the one maintaining their validity in isolation from the supernatural elements, the other insisting that the union of the two

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<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

invalidates both. And each of these views is concerned with the genetic problem. The positive offers an adequate solution if its premise is true; the partial is beset with the difficulty of separating the historical from the unhistorical; the partial and the negative have in common the task of discovering the forces which were productive of the unhistorical which, according to the one, constitutes part of, and according to the other, the whole of the content of the Gospels.

### THE GENETIC PRINCIPLE

Apart from the fundamental issue of principle, the genetic principle seeks to explain historically the origin of the unhistorical elements in the Gospels however these may be defined. It is an evident fact that the Gospels are Christian documents. They were written by Christians and for Christians. They had their origin in a community constituted by its common faith. It is therefore possible that the faith and life of the community may have influenced the Gospel story. The particular form of this influence may be differently conceived; but in general this faith and the influence it may have exerted on Gospel tradition is the genetic principle which the partial and the negative theories share in the explanation of the unhistorical elements in the Gospels. The two views differ in regard to the origin and essential content of this faith, but they are agreed in maintaining for it a creative influence in the production of the Gospel story. The partial theory, finding a substantial element of natural occurrences in the Gospels which is historically trustworthy, seeks the explanation of the origin of primitive Christian faith in a human Jesus, a religious teacher of some distinction, who possibly claimed for himself the vocation of Messiah but who was subject by nature to and did not transcend the limitations of humanity. The negative theory discovers no historical elements in the Gospels and explains the origin of Christian faith in the distinctive quality attributed to its object. This was never

mere humanity subsequently transformed by apotheosis into deity but from the first deity incarnate in human form. To it this quality however shows that the object of Christian faith is mythological, for such an object can never have existed. The natural occurrences recorded in the Gospels, the historical setting of the earthly life of such a mythological person, are but the background upon which the story is sketched and the person himself simply a personification. The positive theory holds that each of these views is right in its central affirmation and wrong in what it denies. It maintains that Jesus was, as the Gospels witness, a true man—but not a mere man; and that in Him a divine person was incarnate—but not as a mythological personification.

The genetic principle is differently named; it manifests itself in a number of ways; and its application to the Gospels yields a variety of results. In the older Rationalism prior to Strauss it was conscious or unconscious deception which, in the Romantic movement, took the form of Essene influence. In Strauss it was the mythical theory, the unhistorical elements in the Gospels having their origin in an unconscious fiction which grew as legend in the Christian community but was chiefly mythical, not in the sense of a history of the gods but as the clothing of a fact in an idea. This process was stimulated and informed chiefly by Old Testament Messianic prophecy. In the Tübingen school the party factions of the early Church were held to have affected the form and content of the Gospels, Matthew being the Gospel of the Jewish Christian party, Luke of the Pauline, Mark representing a later stage, and John the final synthesis of opposing elements in a higher unity. This tendency criticism moreover was combined with an allegorizing interpretation of the Gospels.<sup>29</sup> Weizsäcker<sup>30</sup> distinguishes a creative from a reproductive element. Schmiedel<sup>31</sup> finds

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Weinel, *Ist das "liberale" Jesusbild wiederlegt?* 1910, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Das apostolische Zeitalter*, 1892, p. 393.

<sup>31</sup> *Encyclopædia Biblica*, ii. p. 1872; cf. Warfield, *PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW*, 1913, pp. 195 ff.

in conformity to faith grounds of suspicion of invention, that being held certainly historical which is in contravention of Christian faith. Menzies<sup>32</sup> enumerates an aetiological, an apologetic, and a devotional motive. Bowen<sup>33</sup> names it "Messianisation"; and Bacon<sup>34</sup> has developed the theory of "pragmatic values". Others discover traces of ecstatic elements in Jesus Himself and account for His influence in terms of an abnormal, psycho-pathological constitution.<sup>35</sup> Representatives of the negative view have recourse either to the creative literary activity of an individual<sup>36</sup>—the original Evangelist—under the ethico-religious influences and tendencies of the Graeco-Roman world of the second century, or to mythological impulse having its origin

<sup>32</sup> *The Earliest Gospel*, 1901, pp. 15 ff. Menzies says (*ibid.*, p. 19): "But if we allow that the Gospel tradition was not made up of pure reminiscence, but was modified by the impulse to find in the life of Christ explanations of Church arrangements, by the interest of defending the Christian position, and by the desire for edification, are we driven to the conclusion that the tradition was an entirely unhistorical formation, and that it is not based on actual reminiscences at all? Such a conclusion would be most illogical. . . . The simple fact of the earlier account is surrounded in the later with a veil of wonder; details which might appear too rustic and plain are omitted; the figure of the Saviour is raised more and more above the earth; the story is made always more edifying, more impressive. These phenomena, of which the study of the Synoptic Gospels shows manifold instances, do not point to the conclusion that the facts on which tradition operated were themselves invented. On the contrary the facts were often too real for the tradition to use. They did not at first quite suit the purpose of the Christian community, but had to be changed in the unconscious process of transmission before they could be used."

<sup>33</sup> *The Resurrection in the New Testament*, 1911, pp. 402 ff. Similarly also W. Haupt (*op. cit.*, p. 149): "Pious faith let rays from the glory of the returning Christ fall on suitable places in the earthly life of Jesus and thus created certain points at least that made clearly evident the Messiahship of its Lord. The few reminiscences of the deeds of Jesus that were retained were Messianically illumined; there began the process of a gradual Messianization of the life of Jesus."

<sup>34</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1910, pp. 41 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Schweitzer, *Die psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu*, 1913; "The Sanity of the Eschatological Jesus" in the *Expositor*, 1913, 6, pp. 328 ff., 439 ff., 554 ff.; Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch d. neutest. Theologie*,<sup>2</sup> 1911, pp. 412 f., n. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Bruno Bauer, *Kritik d. evang. Geschichte*, etc.



in some nature or historical myth and interpreted in terms of an early cult, the Gospels being the personification and dramatization of a socio-religious movement among the lower classes in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>37</sup>

Bacon<sup>38</sup> gives the following account of his theory of "pragmatic values":

The theory . . . is called the theory, or better, method, of "pragmatic values", because it starts from the principle that the beginnings of gospel story were not biographies or books, but anecdotes, and were rehearsed not in the abstract endeavor to make up history, but for the concrete and particular occasion, the narrator having in mind that special practice or belief of his own church which at the time was in immediate need of explanation or defense. The inference from such a postulate must be, of course, that we must seek first the practice and belief of the church, resorting to the oldest and best authenticated literature for it. We must take the greater Pauline Epistles and make as it were a cross-section of primitive Christian faith and practice from what we here see before us (as, *e.g.*, in the Corinthian correspondence), and apply this standard to the later formulated narrative literature. . . . Under the theory of "pragmatic values" early church practice and Gospel anecdote reciprocally illuminate one another.

As thus outlined the theory is not so much a principle of differentiation as of construction; only in its application the question must be raised,—are the "anecdotes" and "agglutinated sayings,"<sup>39</sup> whose organization into the Gospel story was occasioned by such a practical interest, true and faithful reminiscences.

Heitmüller<sup>40</sup> in his article on Jesus Christ presents the principle and its results with clearness. After stating, in general agreement with Schmiedel, the principle of contradiction—that those elements of Gospel tradition may be accepted as trustworthy which are not in accord with the faith of the early Christian community—and maintaining

<sup>37</sup> On the "Entpersönlichung des christlichen Urdatums" *cf.* Holtzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 419, n. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1910, pp. 41 f., 53 f.

<sup>39</sup> *Harvard Theological Review*, 1908, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, iii. p. 361; reprinted in his *Jesus*, 1913, p. 40.

that the earliest sources of the Gospels do not go back of but reflect the view of Jesus that was current in the Palestinian Christian community between 50 and 70, Heitmüller says:

Our scrupulousness must be especially active against all the things that were especially dear to the early Christians; to which belong the faith in Jesus' Messiahship, His approaching return, the whole subject of so-called eschatology (the Kingdom of God), the passion and resurrection, and the miraculous power of Jesus. Where the heart and the theology or the apologetic of the early Christians were especially interested, an influence on historical tradition or construction must be feared.

Weinel,<sup>41</sup> after criticising the extreme views of Wrede and Wellhausen, says:

The entire tradition concerning Jesus is Christian, including Mark—in fact Wellhausen's Urmarkus has Christian traits; and the Christian must be stripped off from the portraiture of Jesus before He can Himself be found. But still only the Christian in a particular sense. Jesus was certainly no Jew, but something new; the Christian is to be denied to Him only in so far as it concerns ideas—representations and tendencies—which only the later church could have had.

And so Weinel, after insisting on a more thorough literary criticism, formulates the following principle:<sup>42</sup>

For this [i.e. historical criticism] the sole standard by which the authentic is to be separated from the unauthentic is the principle: only such traits of the tradition are to be rejected as unauthentic which cannot have had their origin in an interest of Jesus but only in an interest of the church. This principle [however] is not to be broadened to include the other that wherever the church had an interest but where there is no reason that Jesus also should not have had it, the tradition is to be declared altogether unauthentic. But since the process is always one of separation, the proof must rather be brought that the particular interest can only have emerged later.

There is need, however, according to Weinel, to separate not merely the authentic from the unauthentic but the essential from the authentic; and the principle of this is "originality".<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 28; *cf.* also pp. 29 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30 f.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38; *cf.* also p. 55.

Not what Jesus shared with His people and His time—this naturally is very often the authentic in the tradition; but what separated Him from His people and His time, that is His, that is the essential in Him and in His preaching.

The results of the application of these theories to the Gospels differ in detail, but they fall within the limits of the two views,—the partial and the negative. In regard to the adequacy of the principles and the validity of the results, it does not follow that the representation of Jesus is untrustworthy because the Gospels are Christian documents or unhistorical because it agrees with primitive Christian faith. It must be shown that the primitive idea of Jesus can not have been true, that the interests or values which manifest themselves in the early Church and are discernible also in the Gospels can not have been valid also for Jesus.<sup>44</sup> And finally the results attained by these principles must be subjected to the test of sufficient reason. Do they explain the origin of the Gospels in the religious movement of which they form a part? Do they give a satisfactory explanation of the Christian faith itself to which creative powers of such significance are attributed and which as an effect demands an adequate cause. But any and every theory of the Gospels must be brought to the test of fact and only that theory will accredit itself which the facts permit and which in turn explains the facts. The evidence must be heard, whether literary or historical, and the well established conclusions in the phenomenal sphere will determine certain limits within which a judgment of value apart from theoretical considerations may be justified. Otherwise we may experience the misery of those of whom Harnack<sup>45</sup> writes who, taking their knowledge of New Testament criticism at second hand,

are like reeds swaying with the blasts of the most extreme and mutually exclusive hypotheses, and find everything in this con-

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, 1907, pp. 146 ff.; PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, 1913, pp. 261 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Sprüche und Reden Jesu*, 1907, pp. 3 f., n. 2; *The Sayings of Jesus*, 1908, p. xiii.

nection which is offered them "very worthy of consideration". To-day they are ready to believe that there was no such person as Jesus, while yesterday they regarded Him as a neurotic visionary, shown to be such with convincing force by His own words, if only they are rightly interpreted—which words, by the way, have been excellently transmitted by tradition. To-morrow He has become for them an Essene, as may be proved likewise from His own words; and yet the day before yesterday none of these words were His own; and perhaps on the very same day it was accounted correct to regard Him as belonging to some Greek sect of esoteric Gnostics—a sect which still remains to be discovered and which with its symbols and sacraments represented a religion of a chaotic and retrograde character, nay, exercised a beneficial influence upon the development of culture. Or rather, He was an anarchist monk like Tolstoi; or, still better, a genuine Buddhist, who had, however, come under the influence of ideas originating in ancient Babylon, Egypt and Greece; or, better still, He was the eponymous hero of the mildly revolutionary and moderately radical fourth estate in the capital of the Roman world. It is evident, forsooth, that He may possibly have been all of these things, and may be assumed to have been one of them. If therefore one only keeps hold of all these reins, naturally with a loose hand, one is shielded from the reproach of not being up to date, and this is more important by far than the knowledge of the facts themselves, which indeed do not so much concern us, seeing that in this twentieth century we must of course wean ourselves from a contemptible dependence upon history in matters of religion.

We may turn then to the phenomenal sphere of criticism and consider the evidence bearing on the historical origin and trustworthiness of the Gospels apart from a particular solution of the issue of principle and its influence on the genetic theories. We shall approach the Gospels and seek to understand them from their own point of view and premises "in the light of their own presuppositions"—and reserve the final decision for the sphere of values in which the data and conclusion of the phenomenal sphere must be weighed and estimated in the light of the Christian faith and its ultimate grounds.

*Princeton.*

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