

DID JESUS
REALLY
LIVE?

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Did Jesus Really Live?

A REPLY TO
'THE CHRIST MYTH'

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PREFACE

THE interest in Jesus of Nazareth seems to grow from more to more. Each succeeding age discovers in him some fresh attraction, or re-interprets in accordance with its own needs aspects of his life and teaching which appealed to former times. In an age of criticism such as ours it is inevitable that much is called in question which once went unchallenged. Hence it need occasion no surprise if Christianity is asked to give an account of itself. In such a case the task of the Christian apologist is not to denounce but to discuss—to indicate that historical criticism is a means of defence and not a mere instrument of attack. Accordingly this little book attempts to deal suggestively rather than exhaustively with the important issue raised in recent critical works. It is written in the sincere hope that it may prove helpful to some who believe with the writer that the historic personality of Jesus is fundamental to Christian faith.

H. J. R.

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DID JESUS REALLY LIVE ?

THAT such a question should be seriously raised may surprise some readers, but no one familiar with recent theological discussions will share that feeling. In Germany especially it has been for some time, and it seems likely to be here, the most interesting of questions. There, its public consideration has been responsible in many places for popular gatherings which for their size and earnestness were as remarkable as they were unusual. Books and pamphlets have been published in rapid succession and in some cases have passed through several editions. Amongst these the one calling for special attention, because largely the cause of this widespread popular interest, is 'Die Christusmythe,' or, as it appears entitled in its recent English translation, 'The Christ Myth.'

Even prior to its appearance the author, Arthur Drews, professor of philosophy in Karlsruhe, had shown himself in other works an uncompromising critic of Christianity, but in none does he so clearly express his conviction that the Christian faith is not founded upon history but upon myth. It is to the radical manner in which he applies this mythical explanation to the person of Jesus, rather than to the originality of his main position, that he owes his present prominence. In Germany itself his negative answer to the above question had been to some extent anticipated, if not prepared for, by other critical works. These, however, concern us here only in so far as the understanding of certain tendencies they illustrate will enable us to characterize his book.

I

The word 'myth' will at once recall to some minds its association with the name of Strauss. He it was who, in his book, 'Das Leben Jesu' (1835-36), compelled many readers of the New Testament to

discriminate between the different incidents reported therein, and to admit that side by side with facts of history were possibly accounts capable of a mythical explanation. In this connexion he understood by a myth 'the clothing in historic form of religious ideas, shaped by the unconsciously inventive power of legend, and embodied in an historic personality' ('The Quest of the Historical Jesus,' by A. Schweitzer, p. 79). But, while some of his predecessors had not hesitated to apply the same explanation to the beginning and end of the life of Jesus, as these are narrated in the Gospels, Strauss carried it even further and subjected the whole of the Gospel narrative to a searching criticism. Yet even he did not question the historical character of the personality of Jesus, but regarded it from a point of view according to which the events which take place in history are of less importance than the ideas they express. The life of Jesus was the expression of the idea of God-Manhood. Once this idea had appeared and found recognition amongst

men, the revealing medium, the history of a particular time and a particular personality, must yield priority of place and importance to the idea, inasmuch as this was of eternal value and capable of general application. It is essential to do justice to this point of view because, as we shall see later, Professor Drews makes it his own, claiming that his purpose is not to overthrow Christianity, but to free it from its local and accidental limitations and give its ideas present-day influence and application.

The immediate effect of Strauss' book was to engage its author in many bitter conflicts with the indignant defenders of traditional Christianity. But it was also responsible for something more. It compelled even his critics to turn afresh to the pages of the New Testament and study its contents from a truer historical point of view and by the aid of more exacting critical canons. While some were confirmed in their faith there were others who went even further than Strauss. Such, for example, was Bruno Bauer, the funda-

mental idea of whose book ('Christus und die Cäsaren,' 1878) was that the Jesus of the Gospels was an imaginary and ideal figure, the creation of a primitive evangelist who lived in the first half of the second century. Still more recently another German critic, Kalthoff, has maintained that Christianity is not due to an historical personality but is the production of the early Christian community as a whole ('Das Christusproblem,' 2nd ed., 1902; 'Die Entstehung des Christenthums,' 1903). It must not be supposed, however, that such critics represent the main tendency of German historical research. Concurrent with the issue of the above-mentioned works there have also appeared many writings which show such a wonderful advance upon the one-sided and unhistorical productions of an earlier period as to justify even from the point of view of New Testament criticism the claim of the last century to be 'the century of history.' The Biblical writings and their sources have been carefully studied, the conditions under which

Judaism and early Christianity existed have become better known than ever before, while the Gospel accounts of Jesus himself have been subjected to searching historical scrutiny. Not least deserving of mention are the services rendered by the scholarly members of the so-called Ritschlian school, men like Professors Harnack, Kaftan, and Herrmann. By their insistence upon sound historical methods, by the painstaking manner in which they have applied these to the solution of Christian problems, they have placed liberal Christians everywhere under a great debt of gratitude. And yet they are, to a certain extent, responsible for one characteristic which appears in the writings of Professor Drews. In their zeal for historical facts and conclusions they have viewed with suspicion the intrusion of metaphysical ideas into the domain of historical criticism, and have denied metaphysicians the right to utter judgment concerning the problems which come up for consideration. No wonder, then, that Professor Drews, who as a

philosopher believes even more strongly than Strauss in the supreme importance of such ideas, stands forth as their champion in strong opposition to the historians who had depreciated them. Thus, his attitude with regard to the tendencies above indicated is this: the mythical explanation is fully accepted by him and deemed sufficient to account for the Jesus of the New Testament. He therefore unhesitatingly rejects all thought of an historical Jesus. In lieu of this his book presents us with the theory of a pre-Christian cult-god Jesus, venerated by certain secret Jewish sects. Further, for him religion does not primarily rest upon historical facts at all, but owes its power to the influence of great and eternally valid ideas. Even if these are first derived from a mythical source their usefulness is not thereby impaired. On the contrary, they may be capable of ever new and wider application in proportion as they are dissociated from the limited and local conditions of a special period or people.

II

If the general point of view is now clear it remains to be seen to what extent it is justified by the book itself. But one thing is apparent at the very outset. Whatever may be the author's conclusion concerning historical facts, he cannot do without them in his evidence. If he is to make good his position that a pre-Christian cult-god of the name of Jesus was believed in, and such belief made possible the rise and spread of the Christian faith, he must submit evidence of that fact sufficient to satisfy historical criticism. If, on the contrary, the long-continued faith in the historical character of Christianity and its founder is to be no longer held, that can only be so because history itself has pronounced the sentence of excommunication. In a word, the question which Professor Drews raises is historical and any treatment of it here must be of that character.

' Die Christusmythe ' is now in its fourth edition and as each new issue has expanded and corrected the contents of its prede-

cessor, it seems fairer to its author to deal with the latest rather than with the English translation ('The Christ Myth') of an earlier edition. It is divided naturally into two parts. The first is constructive, seeking to establish a case for the pre-Christian Jesus; while the second is critical, submitting to close examination the evidence which is offered in support of the historical Jesus. In each case the author acknowledges himself under an obligation to other scholars, and his book makes frequent reference to their writings. Thus, in the earlier half, he avails himself of the conclusions of two authors who, because of the support they give to his thesis, are deserving of special mention. Mr. J. M. Robertson is not unknown to English readers through his works, three of which are referred to by Professor Drews, namely, 'Christianity and Mythology,' 1900; 'A Short History of Christianity,' 1902; and 'Pagan Christs,' 1903. Mr. W. Benjamin Smith, an American professor of mathematics, is mentioned because of his work, 'Der vorchristliche Jesus.' It

may be said that these two writers, and especially the first-named, helped to prepare the steps by which Professor Drews moves to his conclusion. For the sake of clearness and convenience they may be set forth thus :—

1. The name Joshua, which appears so frequently in the Old Testament, is not that of an historical person but denotes an original Ephraimitic sun-god.
2. The belief of the Israelites in one supreme God (Jehovah) co-existed with the worship in secret Jewish sects of a god or half-god Joshua.
3. In the course of time this deity was thought of by his worshippers as the expected Messiah.
4. Those who looked for this Messiah later, under the influence of writings like Psalm xxii. and Isaiah liii., conceived the idea of a Messiah who was to suffer death and afterwards rise again for the sake of mankind.
5. The existence of this conception, together with the influence of other

religions and the widely-held pagan belief in a god of redemption who was to die and rise again, made possible the origin and the rapid extension of the Christian religion.

6. The transference of the mythical contents of the belief in Joshua to a Pauline God-man Jesus presented no difficulty, since 'Joshua' and 'Jesus' are but different forms of one name and mean the same thing.

III

Let us now examine these propositions and estimate the value of the evidence offered in their support. With regard to the first no evidence is forthcoming. It is based upon mere hypothesis which Professor Drews accepts with unquestioning faith from Robertson. How purely hypothetical the theory is, and how precarious it is to rest any argument thereupon, may be seen if we illustrate the critical position. A German scholar (Winckler) considers that Joseph was originally a solar hero. The view is interesting, but

is neither established nor generally regarded as anything more than a mere hypothesis. A second scholar remarks : ' If Joseph was originally a solar hero it would not be surprising if details of solar-mythical origin attached themselves to the Joshua traditions ' (' Encyclopædia Biblica, ' article ' Joshua '). Perhaps not. Surely the really surprising thing is that this ingenious guessing at what might be is speedily transformed into something that actually is when a theory needs support. It is no wonder that when in this way an opening is created for the sun-god Joshua his mother can also pass through the mythical portal. (' Die Christus-mythe, ' p. 48.)

As regards the second proposition it would be interesting if true, and even more surprising than interesting, to know that the worship of a divine being Joshua long obtained in Israel. And this for two reasons : First, it is psychologically improbable ; second, it is linguistically most unlikely. Can it be supposed that in spite of all the prophetic zeal for the purity of

the belief in one God Jehovah, in spite of the teaching and strict enforcing of the Mosaic Law, in spite of the proving of the people by national disaster, captivity, and persecution, such a belief in a rival god should be able to survive for long even in secret? That there were occasional relapses into alien worship, that under the influence of surrounding peoples their gods should receive partial recognition, or exercise a real influence upon Jewish religious thought, are things we should naturally expect, and, as a matter of fact, do actually find in the Old Testament itself. But this is very different from claiming that there was for the long period which the hypothesis implies the persistent worship of Joshua alongside of the worship of Jehovah. Nor does it meet the difficulty to declare that Jewish thought was readily receptive of the fact that mediatorial beings, such as angels, actually existed. That requires no proof, since the Old Testament writings are witness to the fact. But what does require proving is the possibility of any one of these being thought of as divine

and acknowledged as God. The belief in Jehovah's supremacy was too early established and too jealously maintained to permit of any rival near the throne. The inherent improbability of this becomes all the more apparent if we turn to the second reason—that suggested by the name of this supposed god. It is all the more desirable to do this because Professor Drews makes a great deal in his book of the significance of proper names. He rightly recognizes that in earlier times names and their meanings were decisive. But here we have a case in which the name may be instructive, and fortunately it is one more simple and obvious than some of the other examples given. (Cf. the identification of 'Agnus dei' and 'Agni deus,' pp. 103-104; 'Maria' and 'Maya,' p. 78; 'Johannes' and 'Oannes' (Ea), p. 83.) The generally accepted meaning of the word 'Joshua' is: 'Jehovah is deliverance.' This significant and sacred meaning would obviously be well known and held in great regard amongst those who attached so much importance to proper names. Just because

it gave such prominence to the divine name Jehovah and emphasized his character it would be much prized and reverently applied. It was in fact a popular name amongst pious Jews, and Josephus mentions many personages in his history who had received the name Joshua. But we are asked to believe in the continued existence of certain sects who had committed the worst possible crime in the eyes of their religion by rejecting Jehovah and had actually applied this significant and sacred name to a rival god! The thing is as incredible to us as it would have been thought impious amongst themselves. This inherent improbability makes it all the more necessary that the evidence in its favour should be overwhelmingly strong. But, as we have seen, there is no evidence offered worthy of serious consideration.

So does the matter stand with respect to the third proposition. No evidence of an adequate character is given to confirm the supposed belief in a Messianic Joshua. All probability is as much against such a view as it is against the secret worship

of a god of that name by Jewish sects.

The fourth proposition involves certain critical problems which need solution before it is possible to prove anything by it. But this much may be said: the very passages on which Professor Drews lays such stress do not establish his point. The generally-accepted view of scholars concerning the meaning of Psalm xxii. and Isaiah liii. is that an individual is not spoken of but a nation—the collective nation of Israel. Further, the language describes what is taking place in the lifetime of the writers and not an event which is to happen in the future. Finally, there is no evidence that a belief in personal resurrection was held by the writers or by any of their countrymen. Accordingly, it is practically impossible to suppose that the passages in question give any support to a belief in an individual Messiah who at some future time would die and rise again. Their obvious interest is in the Jewish nation as they knew it then. It was being brought low, but the writers are assured that such humiliation will not be final

but will be followed by national exaltation. (Cf. 'The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament,' by Professor Peake, pp. 61-66 ; 'Isaiah,' chapters xl.-lxvi., by Professor J. Skinner, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, pp. 233-238.)

That among other nations and in other religious communities a belief was held about some god who would die and rise again there is no reason to doubt, and the information which Professor Drews' book presents is in itself interesting. But what remains to be proved is that this belief had influenced Jewish sects to such an extent as to become dominant and determinative. It is precisely this that our author fails to show, both in regard to this particular matter and in regard to some others. He devotes considerable space to materials brought together by the students of comparative religion and seems to imply that because he can point to certain general parallels between the Hindu and other religions and Christianity that these therefore pre-suppose contact and Christian indebtedness. Thus, we are told that the

Buddhistic and Christian birth stories are so alike in their details that there can be no question of mere coincidence ('Die Christusmythe,' pp. 66-67). A little later this Buddhistic influence becomes something more than a possibility, it is used as an established fact and we are confidently informed that Buddhism has mediated the Krishna myth to Christianity (*Ibid.*, p. 72). All such reasoning is vitiated by the undoubted fact that in the same period of general culture in human development widely-separated centres may entertain independently similar religious conceptions and aspirations. To talk of indebtedness in such cases is idle ; to prove it, more than general resemblances or even the presence of similar details will be required. Yet this does not deter Professor Drews from finding the dominating influence of myth in every phase of Christian worship or work. How easy it is under such circumstances to miss the simple and obvious explanation because of a pre-conceived one may be shown by reference to one of the most important sections in the first part of Professor

Drews' book—that dealing with the symbolism of the Messiah. This will be all the more convincing since that section is one of special attraction for its author and seems to embody some independent conclusions. No one, however, familiar with the work of scholars like Hatch will be unprepared to find that Christian symbolism is no isolated development but one sharing in certain general peculiarities. That it should have occurred to the members of other religious communities to think of a lamb or a cross because of its symbolic suggestions is no surprising discovery. We may therefore pay our tribute to Professor Drews' industry in accumulating examples of such widespread symbolism, without necessarily perceiving therein any cumulative evidence of equally indubitable religious intimacy. It is further conceivable that far behind this symbolism of a lamb the Zodiacal ram Aries may have exercised some originating influence. But to connect Aries with examples drawn from different religions and then to point to 'the Lamb of God' of Christian

devotion as if causal connexion were clearly made out is to achieve a triumph of mistaken mythical zeal. Surely the actual explanation is so much more simple! What more natural than that primitive people committed to a sacrificial ritual should independently think of a lamb for sacrificial purposes, that in course of time the associations which clustered around it should be refined and spiritualized until at length some deeply religious soul was able to rise to the conception of a symbol at once so satisfying and so deeply spiritual as that which has endeared itself to Christian devotion and Christian art. As a matter of fact we know that not only the Israelites but also their Semitic kinsfolk passed through such stages of development. In their case we can clearly trace it in the case of the Paschal lamb. Nor is the knowledge of this confined to, or dependent upon, familiarity with the Hebrew writings. The Greek translation of the latter, known as the Septuagint, had prior to Christianity found a wide circle of readers outside Palestine and

prepared the materials for Christian symbolism like that of John i. 29. That line of connexion is clear and historically certain. It only required the man of reflective mind and spiritual vision and then Christianity became enriched by a symbol richer in suggestiveness than any of the examples so industriously brought together from far by Professor Drews. The same applies to his treatment of the cross and other common religious symbols. The facts, interesting in themselves, have no evidential value, and even the case of probability is discounted by the sufficiency of some more simple explanation to account for Christian development.

Already reasons have been advanced to show that the theory of a pre-Christian cult-god Jesus is improbable in the light of certain general considerations. But Professor Drews is not more successful when, under the guidance of Professor W. B. Smith, he tries to prove by more particular facts the existence of these secret Jewish sects within which the worship of the pre-Christian Jesus was carried on. We are

referred to a community known as the Jessäer, about which we know scarcely anything. As regards their name it is supposed to be connected with the name of Jesse, the father of David. There is no evidence to show that such a community existed before the Christian era. So, too, with regard to another sect known as the Naassenes or Ophites. Much is made by Professor Drews, following Professor Smith, of the testimony of a hymn used by this sect, because of its reference to Jesus. But it is necessary to show that this hymn dates from pre-Christian times, and there is not the slightest evidence of that. On the contrary, we only know of its use after Christ, and also that these Naassenes make use of Paul's Epistles and John's Gospel and are therefore living later than the time of Jesus. Even Professor Smith does not directly claim that the hymn is pre-Christian. He merely says that it is old, 'no one can say how old!' This encourages Professor Drews to affirm that it is, 'according to all appearance, a pre-Christian hymn.' ('Die Christusmythe,')

p. 23.) Yet surely philosophy finds it essential to distinguish between 'appearance' and 'reality'!

IV

We cannot deal at length with the other matters supposed to indicate the existence of these secret Jewish sects. But sufficient has been said to show that the case for a pre-Christian cult-god Jesus rests upon exceedingly precarious foundations. This was in fact made clear by scholars like Professor Johannes Weiss when dealing in public discussion with Professor Drews' position. (See 'Jesus von Nazareth: Mythos oder Geschichte,' by Johannes Weiss, pp. 19-21.) But when pressed on the point Professor Drews declared that his rejection of the view that the historical Jesus was the founder of Christianity was not dependent upon the acceptance of his view of the existence of a pre-Christian cult-god Jesus. It is necessary, therefore, to examine his theory of the origin of the Christian religion and decide whether it, or the generally-accepted view of the

historical Jesus, can best explain the facts.

The mythical explanation has been to some extent anticipated, but it is desirable to deal with it now at greater length. First of all, however, history and not myth receives recognition by Drews himself in the endeavour to account for Christianity as we know it. For if personality is dispensed with in regard to Jesus it re-enters with the historical Paul and does important service. It is true that we are not left uninformed that certain critics, notably some members of the Dutch school, cast doubts upon the authenticity of the Pauline writings, but nevertheless the four great Epistles (Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Romans) are conceded historical value within certain limits, namely, those demanded by our author's theory. They are, in point of fact, absolutely essential for his purpose, since it is the historical Paul of which they are the chief witness whom he regards as the virtual founder of Christianity. We have seen that according to his hypothesis there existed already, prior to Christianity, a

belief in a cult-god Jesus (Joshua). Professor W. B. Smith is more explicit and says the Jesus cult was spread amongst the Jews, and especially amongst the Hellenists in Asia Minor, in the century before and the century after Christ. This, thinks Professor Drews, explains the instant appearance and rapid spread of Christianity upon so wide a territory, and particularly in Asia Minor. This furnished Paul, a Jewish believer by birth and education, with his great opportunity. Born in the Greek city of Tarsus, in Asia Minor, he had unconsciously absorbed some of the pagan expectation of a god who was to die and rise again for the redemption of mankind. Further, as a pious Jew, and a pupil of Gamaliel, he had consciously shared in the Messianic hopes of his own Jewish co-religionists. Then, in a moment of illumination it occurred to him that the conception of a god who willingly sacrifices himself in the manner emphasized in the Adonis and Attis cults might meet the religious need of his day. Why could it not be true, as the adherents of the Jesus

sects maintained, that the Messiah was indeed the 'Servant of Jehovah' of Psalm xxii. and Isaiah liii., who had by his own voluntary death completed the work of redemption? Such a conception would serve to heal the breach between the ideal righteousness required by the Mosaic Law and the real unrighteousness of which he was so painfully aware. To do this effectually, however, it was essential that the act of redemption should be represented on the human plane of existence, thereby satisfying the conditions produced by Adam's sin. The moment in which this thought flashed across the mind of Paul was that of the birth of Christianity as a religion of Paul. God became man in order that a man might be exalted to God, and, by virtue of his atoning, vicarious act on behalf of his people, men could be reconciled with God. Thus, in the thought of the God-man the needed reconciliation is made complete. For that purpose no historic personality was necessary. With Paul, as with pagan believers, that did not come into consideration. It was merely

the idea of a Messiah in the flesh which Paul endeavoured to make operative for faith. Of an historical Jesus his writings have nothing to report, and to look for that is to misunderstand the kernel of his religious view of life. ('Die Christusmythe,' pp. 136-142.)

But what, then, of the Jesus of Nazareth presented in the Gospels? There, too, it is not a question of history. The 'historic' Jesus is later than Paul, later even than the Christian Church—it is in fact a derivative of both. It first existed as idea in the Pauline presentation of Christianity, but later reflects the view and apologetic purpose of the sub-apostolic community. The new religion was threatened by a formidable heresy, Gnosticism, the believers in which emphasized the unreal human nature of the crucified Christ. In opposition thereto, as well as for other practical reasons, it was necessary to lay stress upon the real humanity of Jesus. The outcome is the Jesus of the Gospels. 'Thus from the beginning the historical Jesus has been a dogma, a poem of the

growing and struggling church, and the product of its religious and practical political needs. In this way has it actually secured the victory, not, however, as historical reality, but as idea, or in other words—the protective patron, the genius of ecclesiastical Christianity, has not been an historical Jesus in the peculiar sense of an actual human individual but merely the idea of such, and it was this which not only won for it the victory over Gnosticism but also over the Mithras cult and the other religions of the related gods of redemption of Asia Minor.' ('Die Christus-mythe,' pp. 217-219.)

V

Sufficient has now been said to indicate Professor Drews' explanation of the origin of the Christian religion. In some cases his actual words have been closely followed above in order to do full justice to his point of view. Let us at once submit it to examination. But if we accept the limits imposed and confine ourselves to the four great Pauline Epistles this must not imply

that we doubt the authenticity of all the other writings attributed to the apostle. On the contrary, the consensus of critical opinion is just as favourable to the Pauline authorship of I Thessalonians and other Epistles as it is to Galatians, I and II Corinthians, and Romans. That fact, however, may be waived and attention concentrated upon these particular Epistles. Is it then true that they tell us nothing of the historical Jesus? Certainly not as we have them in our New Testament. But we are speedily confronted with a remarkable contrast revealed in the respective halves of Professor Drews' book. The easy acceptance of favourable but unestablished theories which characterized the earlier attempt to build up his thesis of the pre-Christian cult-god Jesus yields place to the most thorough-going scepticism when he deals with the evidence presented in favour of the historical Jesus. Now he emphasizes the Christian tendency to interpolate passages supporting the Church's point of view, makes much of Oriental fantasy and its free-handling of

history, and dwells upon the uncertainty of oral tradition. Thus, if Paul gives his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper and emphasizes it as one 'received of the Lord' (I Cor. xi. 23), we are to understand that this account has no historical value but is a later Christian interpolation. (Cf. 'Die Christusmythe,' pp. 127-128.) So, too, with regard to the apostle's familiar reference to the appearances of the risen Lord (I Cor. xv. 5-8). This also is due to interpolation, one reason advanced for this conclusion being that the Gospels do not mention the fact of Christ's appearance 'to above five hundred brethren at once.' But neither do the Gospels mention Christ's appearance to Paul himself, supremely important as the apostle thought it to be! It is strange, however, that Professor Drews should fail to see how easily his own theory can account for such omissions and make any suggestion of interpolation in this case quite unnecessary. If, as he claims, the Gospels betray an apologetic point of view, their purpose being to emphasize the superiority

of the other apostles to Paul as personal disciples and eye-witnesses of their Lord, what more natural than that the Gospels should omit Paul's reference to other appearances of the risen Christ and merely include those which concern such witnesses? We do not ourselves contend that this is the true explanation. But surely it is the kind of explanation which Professor Drews favours in other cases and only ignores here because of a pre-conceived but inconclusive theory of interpolation. As it is, there are serious objections to the latter. Paul's list of Christ's appearances not only impresses one as a most careful compilation but also as an attempt to give the chronological order in which Christ appeared to his believers. As such, it is deserving of the most earnest consideration. Further, the passage forms such an integral part of the chapter that its exclusion would make Paul's subsequent remarks meaningless. If, then, for these reasons we may regard the passage as original, what evidential value does it possess? Surely this much at least: we perceive that prior to

the appearance of Christ to Paul at his conversion—for it is the latter event of which the apostle is thinking—the risen Lord had been seen by men who, in his earthly activities, were in association with him, not in 'idea' only, but in actual historical fact. From such Paul had 'received' the particulars of Christ's death and burial which formed the subject of his utterance to the Corinthian converts.

But, it may be objected—and Professor Drews and other critics raise the objection—how is it that Paul's Epistles practically exclude all particulars dealing with the earthly life of Jesus? His miracles are unnoticed; his teaching, with the exception of one or two brief references (Cf. I Cor. 7¹⁰⁻¹¹ and Mark 10¹¹⁻¹², Luke 16¹⁸; I Cor. 9¹⁴, and Luke 10⁷), is not mentioned; while the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, which is so fundamental in the teaching of Jesus, leaves scarcely a trace in the Pauline writings. All this may be readily conceded without for a single moment committing ourselves to the wholly unwarranted conclusion 'that Paul knows

nothing of an historical Jesus.' ('Die Christusmythe,' p. 157.) Do not the Epistles themselves, and the point of view they disclose, account for the paucity of details concerning Jesus' early life? The former are not so much a full and formal utterance of Paul's Christian thought as fugitive writings destined to deal with some particular occasion. The fact that certain things do not appear is merely because they were not deemed pertinent to such occasions. Further, not only the circumstances but also the apostle's own predilections made his point of view doctrinal. For that he could find little support in the teaching of Jesus, since that was essentially practical. Hence, in Paul's writings, the ethical does not lead up to the doctrinal but the latter suggests his own ethical conclusions and applications. The fact that even in such cases he refers to the authority of the Lord seems to indicate that had his purpose been different he could and would have drawn much more frequently upon the teaching of Jesus. Despite the special

conditions there are not a few passages where his finest ethical utterances reflect that teaching and imply a verbal knowledge of it. (Cf. Romans 12¹⁴, 13⁷⁻¹⁰.) Finally, the Epistles must be judged in the light of what they themselves tell us of Paul's religious experience. Apparently knowing nothing at first-hand of the earthly Jesus, he believed his point of contact with the new faith was vitally established for him by the appearance and power of the exalted Christ. Henceforth that determines his religious outlook, colours all his theological conceptions. 'Christ and him crucified,' not Jesus, the Galilean teacher, is the influential factor in his Christian faith and the first and final source of his appeal. Little wonder, then, that the metaphysical and not the physical is of pre-eminent importance in his Epistles. But even in the latter the historic life of Jesus is pre-supposed and is in fact imperative for the doctrinal system which Paul creates. For, be it carefully noted, the apostle never once speaks of a god of redemption nor is this even obscurely

implied in his presentation of Christ—surely a most unaccountable fact were Professor Drews' theory of Paul's special significance approximately true. To him 'there is one God, the Father' (I Cor. 8⁶). If, in the same passage, he goes on to speak of 'one Lord, Jesus Christ,' he thinks of him not as a god but as a divine instrument, the revealer of him who from the beginning had pre-ordained Paul's Christian apostleship (Galatians 1¹⁵⁻¹⁶). He is 'born of the seed of David according to the flesh' (Romans 1³). Unless his humanity be real and not merely ideal it is powerless to secure human redemption. 'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (I Cor. 15²¹⁻²²). Without the correlation of the actual humanity of Christ to the humanity of Adam not only does the curse of the Law still remain but the hope of man's resurrection is delusive. Only on that human plane of existence where the Law became operative can it be rendered inoperative

and only there by one who acknowledges its power and takes upon himself its condemnation (Cf. Galatians 4⁴⁻⁵). That is to say, the Pauline superstructure of doctrine can rest only upon one foundation, that of the real human life and death of Jesus. Without such foundation every form of Christian faith, orthodox and heterodox alike, is unable to stand. To affirm this is not to deny Paul's belief in Christ's pre-existence or to overlook the later Christian doctrines concerning the character of Christ's person. Rather is it to emphasize that these demand, and cannot dispense with, a belief that Jesus did really live and that this fact finds clear recognition in Paul's own writings, even in the four great Epistles to which we have limited our attention.

VI

Let us now pass to the Gospels and consider their testimony. In their case we have to do with writings concerning one, who, so far as we know, left no written word of his own. We are therefore de-

pendent upon the evangelists for our information concerning their great subject. In their case, as in that of all witnesses dealing with supposed matters of fact, we are bound to ask certain pertinent questions: What is their evidential value? What sources of information were open to them? In what spirit do they use their materials and what is their personal attitude to the one whose doings and sayings they report? It will be more profitable to answer these questions before we deal with the theory of the character of the Gospels which is advanced in Professor Drews' book.

First of all, we may start with the generally-accepted critical views concerning the relations of the Gospels to each other and the order of their origin. We may at once differentiate between the first three Gospels, the so-called Synoptics, because of their common point of view, and the Fourth Gospel. It is practically an axiom of modern New Testament criticism that while the other Gospels represent an attempt to put forward an historical treat-

ment of the life of Jesus the remaining Gospel reflects the spiritual impression made by that life upon its author. Hence John, unlike Luke, for example, does not endeavour to set down things 'in order' (Luke 1³), but freely handles and modifies his materials in accordance with his reflective purpose. There are cases, it is true, in which John may be accepted as a superior historical witness to the other evangelists. Thus, it is now generally admitted that his date for the crucifixion is historically more probable than that assigned to it by the Synoptic Gospels. Nevertheless, when it is a question of general historical appeal, rather than a reference to a particular point, the Synoptics and not the Fourth Gospel are regarded as having the right to give evidence. Consequently, we shall confine our attention to them.

Again, it is also accepted that of the first three Gospels the earliest in origin is the Gospel according to Mark. Professor Drews makes much of the fact that even Mark was not written until after the

destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. that is, 'at least forty years after the death of Jesus' ('Die Christusmythe,' p. 165). It is curious that he should thus ignore one of the best-established conclusions of New Testament criticism, namely, that Mark as we have it was in all probability written before the fall of Jerusalem and Matthew and Luke after it. The reason for this is found in the Gospels themselves, for while Mark xiii. seems to imply that it was written before the Roman armies were threatening Jerusalem the same discourse as reported in Matthew xxiv. and Luke xxi. contains expressions which imply that Jerusalem had been already overcome (Cf. Luke 21²⁰). Hence, while critics are by no means unanimous on the point, the most recent criticism favours a time of origin for Mark prior to the year 70 A.D. Further, Christian tradition, relying upon a written statement of Papias preserved by Eusebius, has ever regarded the author of Mark as specially the mouthpiece of Peter. The statement is as follows:— 'Mark, having become Peter's interpreter,

wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord, nor followed him, but subsequently attached himself to Peter, who used to frame his teachings to the needs of his hearers, but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses. So Mark made no mistake, while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them; for he made it his own care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein.' This traditional statement becomes even more entitled to careful consideration in the light of Mark's selection of incidents from the life of Jesus. Precisely those incidents are most fully reported in which the apostle Peter plays a leading part. It is from the time that Peter first appears that the close attention to details begins. (Cf. Mark 1¹⁶⁻³¹.) The scenes enacted on the Mount of Olives and in the palace of the high priest make Peter as prominent as they do Jesus himself. (Cf. Mark 14²⁶⁻⁷².) All these things seem

to show that Mark's Gospel does actually embody an important Petrine tradition. (Cf. 'Jesus von Nazareth: Mythos oder Geschichte,' by Professor Johannes Weiss, pp. 144-145; 'The History of Early Christian Literature,' by Professor von Soden, pp. 142-152.) But it is hardly possible that Mark would write down the things he heard from Peter until after the latter's death, that is, in the year 64 A.D. Hence the limits within which Mark's Gospel originated are A.D. 64-70, and we may consider that the year 68 will very well fit the facts. The comparatively late date of origin on which Professor Drews lays such stress, with the inherent possibility that oral tradition may have considerably altered the facts before they found a written form, has often been emphasized by critics of the Gospels. On the other hand, we have anticipated this line of argument by endeavouring to show that there is a direct connexion between our Gospel of Mark and one who was an actual eyewitness of some of the incidents reported. As against the view that Oriental fantasy

had no historical sense, and did not hesitate to adapt any materials in accordance with its purpose, we need to remember the wonderfully retentive character of the Oriental memory for facts and for speeches. It was by virtue of this that Eastern teachers could so often dispense with the written aids necessitated by our defective Western memory. European residents in Arabia to-day tell of the wonderful feats of memory performed by the Arabs, and some have said that if much of the popular literature were destroyed the contents could easily be written down again completely by the aid of oral tradition. But when we remember further that the first disciples were Jews trained to literal accuracy in all that appertained to Scripture, and that very soon all that was reported of Jesus would have the same claim upon their reverential regard, we have strong probability that our earliest records of Jesus are substantially correct.

This not only affects our attitude towards Mark's Gospel but also tells in favour of the second great source of information

concerning Jesus, the collection of sayings or speeches known as 'The Words of Jesus,' or the 'Q Document' as it is designated by the critics. While Mark, in contradistinction to Matthew and Luke, confines its attention almost wholly to incidents in the life of Jesus, they not only contain Mark's incidents but devote much of their space to the Master's actual teachings. A comparison between the latter as recorded in Matthew and Luke respectively makes it plain that both evangelists draw upon the same source, although they do not always observe the same order or devote the same amount of space when reporting the utterances of Jesus. The fact that while they are working independently at the same task they remain in essential harmony is in itself favourable to the credibility of the sources and the reliability of the compilers of the Gospels.

Let us now examine these sources more closely in order to test their value as historical witnesses for the life of Jesus. We have already stated that the Gospel

according to Mark is not the work of an eye-witness. It is true that attempts have been made to identify the author with the unnamed young man of Mark 14⁵¹⁻⁵² and with the unnamed water-carrier of Mark 14¹³. The fact that the former incident is recorded only in Mark's Gospel is thought by some scholars to favour such identification. It is better, however, not to rely upon this reasoning but to look elsewhere for more trustworthy information. Various references are made in the New Testament to one bearing the name of Mark, and they seem to warrant this conclusion: the person implied was a Jew by birth, bearing the Jewish name John, but also, in accordance with a custom which widely obtained, using a Roman name (Mark). Thus, he is alluded to as 'John, whose surname was Mark' (Acts 12²⁵), or 'John, who was called Mark' (Acts 15³⁷). But in Acts he is first of all mentioned in connexion with Peter, when it appears that he was son of a Christian lady, named Mary, who had a home in Jerusalem in which Christian

meetings took place (Acts 12¹²). It was to the house of this lady that Peter is reported to have made his way on his release from prison. On the other hand, there are references which indicate a close connexion between Mark and Paul. He accompanies the latter and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but later, much to Paul's indignation, abandons his journey and returns to Jerusalem (Acts 13¹³). The consequence is an estrangement between Paul and Mark, which makes it impossible for them to prosecute later missionary plans together, and resulting also in the temporary separation of Barnabas from Paul, since he elects to go with Mark, his cousin (Colossians 4¹⁰). But seeing that the latter passage shows that Mark is then with Paul in his imprisonment at Rome their earlier difference had been reconciled. While it lasted it is not improbable that Peter and Mark had been co-operating.

VII

Now what is the value of these references ? To one who, like Professor Drews, is exceedingly sceptical concerning any statements vouched for only by the Book of Acts, their value will seem very small. But for others, they may appear to give probability to this conclusion : Mark, the reputed author of our earliest Gospel, was personally acquainted with Paul and Peter, taking part in the Gentile mission of the former and also engaged with the latter in making known incidents from the life of Jesus. Further, unlike Peter, he was familiar with both Greek and Aramaic, the mother-tongue of Jesus and the people of Palestine generally. By birth a Jew, and by residence a citizen of Jerusalem, we should expect him to show familiarity with Jewish customs and places. How far do these facts, made probable by external references, accord with the information yielded by a study of the actual Gospel of Mark ? In the first place, it is perfectly plain that the author is writing for the benefit of Gentile rather than

Jewish Christians, and is therefore writing outside Palestine. He is careful to explain the meaning of Jewish customs and names, although these appear quite familiar to himself. (Cp. Mark 7³⁻⁴, 15⁴², 7¹¹, 10⁴⁶.) But the natural tendency of one writing for the benefit of those who were not Jews would be to exclude such Jewish details as far as possible. Especially would this be so in the case of one who was attendant to Paul, who, *ex hypothesi*, knew nothing of the life of Jesus. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable that this particular Gospel is singularly rich in Jewish details and characterized by local colouring not found in the other Gospels. Only in this Gospel do we learn that Simon of Cyrene is the father of Alexander and Rufus (15²¹). Nowhere else are we given the details which appear in Mark 15⁴⁻¹⁶; or the precise words uttered by Jesus as in Mark 5⁴¹, 7³⁴. Now if the presence of such details is to be accounted for by the theory of Professor Drews that the dangers of Gnosticism compelled the Christian Church to emphasize the real humanity of

Jesus, and that these details owe their origin to that apologetic purpose, it only raises this difficulty: How is it that the Gospels which are written later contain fewer details of that character, that the references to Jewish customs and the richness of Jewish local colouring are characteristic of our earliest Gospel Mark and not of Matthew and Luke, although they stand nearer to the time when Gnosticism was growing more threatening and formidable to Christianity? Surely a much more reasonable explanation of this fact accounts for those details in Mark by supposing that he is making use of information acquired either at first-hand by himself or received from an actual eye-witness of the scenes and events described? If so, the information given by the Gospel of Mark becomes clearly of the utmost importance for the historical life of Jesus.

What, then, has it to say concerning him who is usually thought of as the founder of Christianity? It gives precise biographical details concerning Jesus, such as the name of his city, Nazareth of Galilee

(Mark 1⁹), and the names of his mother and brothers (Mark 6³) ; and also, without naming them, indicates that he has sisters. We learn that prior to his appearance as a public teacher he, like so many Jewish Rabbis, was of the artisan class, for he is referred to as ' the carpenter ' (Mark 6³). He is brought into relationship with another public teacher, John the Baptist, and, apparently under his influence, begins to proclaim the immediate coming of the Kingdom of God. Availing himself of the opportunity afforded by the customs of the Synagogue, he teaches the people assembled there for worship (Mark 1²¹, 3¹). Further, he takes steps to provide for himself and for the prosecution of his public work a more intimate audience. Inspired by his example, and responsive to his personal appeal, twelve men of his own class are appointed to share in his work and execute his commissions. We are told their names (Mark 3¹⁶⁻¹⁹), the circumstances under which some of them arrived at their decision to follow him (Mark 1¹⁶⁻²⁰, 2¹⁴), and particulars of their

private lives (Mark 1²⁰, 29-31). From time to time there appear in the narrative personal touches casting light upon Jesus' relations with his own people. To all appearances they are not in sympathy with his aims (Mark 3³¹⁻³⁵), and so far miss the inner meaning of what he does that they wish to take him away forcibly, since they deem him mad (Mark 3²¹). He likewise comes into conflict with the chief parties of his day, and we gain an insight into the attitude of the Herodians (Mark 3⁶) and the different points of view of Pharisee and Sadducee (Mark 10²⁻⁹, 12¹⁸⁻²⁷). Occasionally the scene is particularized by the introduction of details not in themselves important but tending to make more real and vivid the scene described. We pass the place of toll (Mark 2¹⁴), take note of the boat which is to serve as Jesus' place of refuge from the crowd (Mark 3⁹), and with him watch the people as they cast their offerings into the Temple treasury (Mark 12⁴¹). In the case of all such references there is created no feeling of forced intrusion. They are introduced with per-

fect naturalness into their place, their effect being to furnish a background which, if not historical, at all events makes the impression of such. It is precisely here that the mythical explanation fails to satisfy the mind. For it is not alone the environment which is natural. The figure of Jesus is in full harmony with the scene of his activities as portrayed in Mark's narrative. As a Jew who is perfectly familiar with Jewish customs and takes part in Jewish observances, he is quite at home in his environment. This fact Professor Drews never appears to perceive, otherwise it would occur to him that to explain the presence of one or two detailed references in the Gospel is far from disposing of the arguments for the historical life of Jesus. It is the cumulative effect of many details, quite naturally and incidentally given by the evangelist, which creates the ineffaceable impression of reality. How futile it is, therefore, in the face of this to conclude that the number of the disciples is explained by the fact that Joshua had twelve helpers when

he passed through Jordan to the Promised Land! ('Die Christusmythe,' p. 183). Even were this true in itself the general impression would remain the same. It is only a desire to find myth everywhere which makes the author of this theory apparently forget that the number twelve had a natural significance for every Jew who had read or heard of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Moreover, he forgets that in another part of his book he has already mentioned with approval that Robertson has accounted for the Last Supper and the number of disciples partaking thereof by a supposition that Aaron, as the representative of Moses, was associated with twelve priests at the Passover Meal! ('Die Christusmythe,' p. 95). Perhaps later it may have seemed to Professor Drews that a mere supposition unsupported by fact was insufficient to account for anything. Hence other Old Testament examples are called upon to do mythical service. But separately or collectively these attempts to establish Christian indebtedness really prove nothing and are not even probable.

Let a further feature of Mark's narrative be carefully noted. It would appear that the author is fully convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, even though the term 'Son of God' which is given at the opening of the Gospel in the Revised Version is omitted in the best New Testament manuscripts. On three occasions, at his baptism, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and on his trial before the high priest, Jesus is addressed in terms which have a Messianic significance (Mark 1¹¹, 9⁷, 14⁶). Opinions are divided as to whether the term 'Son of Man,' which occurs in Mark fourteen times, must be regarded as a Messianic title. But it may be noted in passing that its frequent use by Jesus himself is characteristic of the Gospels and has no counterpart in the New Testament writings which are not chiefly concerned with the earthly life of Jesus. Thus, the fourteen Epistles attributed to Paul never once make use of the term 'Son of Man.' But as regards Mark's account of Jesus, and reading it in the light of such Messianic terms, there is to be noted this significant

fact : only by degrees does Jesus appear to have thought of himself as the Messiah and not until near the end of his career does he allow the fact to be publicly recognized. This clear indication of mental growth and developing self-consciousness is both historically and psychologically probable. That it should be found in a Gospel which deals only with the short public career of Jesus entitles it to the most serious consideration as a fact of history. In the case of a myth we are prepared for amplifications and accretions, but very rarely do we find marks of inward growth and developing self-consciousness in purely mythical accounts.

If now we remember that Mark's narrative of the activities of Jesus is used both by Matthew and Luke, it might appear from this fact that the accounts of the latter have no independent value but are merely variants of the one source, sharing its characteristics and reproducing its good or bad historical qualities. But no one can study the Gospels of Matthew and Luke without realizing that these evan-

gelists are not slavish copiers of Mark's account. Each occupies his own peculiar point of view and uses his materials in his own way. Hence if Mark is followed it is because the two later evangelists independently approve of the truth of what Mark reports. Consequently, the presence of any fact in the three Gospels implies that it has a threefold attestation. This needs to be borne in mind in trying to realize the historical value of the later accounts. They may and do contain episodes or sayings which are obviously unhistorical and due to the idealizing tendencies of the authors. Mark itself is not free from the same tendency, and it is therefore to be expected that it should characterize even to a larger extent the Gospels which stand at a further distance from the historical life of Jesus. The question, however, is not whether the Synoptics are wholly historical, but whether, after making all allowance for the presence of mythical elements and matters due to later reflection, we still receive the impression that the evangelists are dealing with

an actual historical person and using sources of information having historical value. In the case of Mark, our earliest Gospel, we have advanced reasons to show that it gives the strongest affirmative answer to the question 'Did Jesus really live?' Not less is it the case with regard to Matthew and Luke. While they have not the same fulness of biographical detail which was emphasized in the case of Mark's Gospel they make the same impression upon the mind. Their unifying centre is an historical personality at home in the environment in which it is portrayed by the writers. No other factor could have brought about the same unity or been responsible for the feeling of life and movement which is forthcoming everywhere—in the developing religious consciousness of Jesus no less than in the developing and declining popularity which attend the course of his public ministry. The impression which this leaves upon the mind is that which has been so well described by Dr. Fairbairn: 'The Evangelists are full of the feeling for the time :

they understand its men, schools, classes, parties ; they know the thoughts that are in the air, the rumours that run along the street ; they are familiar with the catch-words and phrases of the period, its conventions, questions, modes of discussion, and style of argument. And all is presented with the utmost realism, so grouped round the central figure so as to form a perfect historical picture, he and his setting being so built together as to constitute a single organic whole. Now this appears a feat which the mythical imagination, working with material borrowed from the Old Testament, could not have performed. It could not have made the hero mythical without making the conditions under which he lived and the persons with whom he lived the same. The realism of these conditions and persons is incompatible with the mythical idealism of him through whom they are, and whose environment they constitute. The organic unity of person and history seems to involve the reality of both.' ('The Philosophy of the Christian Religion,' pp. 328-329.)

VIII

Something needs to be said about the second great source of our knowledge of the life of Jesus. While Mark came into existence in response to the desire for information concerning the actual life of Jesus there must have co-existed an equally imperative desire for the words of one who is represented in that life as a teacher. One proof of this is to be seen in the fact that Matthew and Luke not only reproduce Mark's incidents from the life of Jesus but they also give in addition examples of his teaching. It is in them and not in Mark's Gospel that we have that most familiar and characteristic of Jesus' discourses—the Sermon on the Mount. Whether Mark left out this and other discourses because he wished merely to deal with events, or whether he did so because at the time he wrote he knew of the existence of a compilation which was concerned solely with the Words or Sayings of Jesus is not known, but although the latter cannot be proved it seems at least probable. At all events one of the most

certain of critical conclusions is that such a collection did exist and shares with Mark the honour of being an earlier source of information than Matthew or Luke as we have them in the New Testament. While there are parts of Luke which seem due to a third source, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Parable of the Prodigal Son, yet that Gospel seems to depend for the most part upon the source which supplies Matthew with its account of the teachings of Jesus. Hence this common source has received the name of Logia or 'Words.' A more common designation is 'Q' (Quelle, source). It is one of the features of Professor Drews' book that he delivers a twofold attack upon the teaching of Jesus. He not only regards it as devoid of historical value but denies it all originality and intrinsic greatness. The Sermon on the Mount is but the weaving together of sayings which are to be found in old Jewish literature. Even the Lord's Prayer has its prototype in the Old Testament, while Parables like that of the Sower, the Good Samaritan,

and the Prodigal Son have not the least claim to originality. The greatest utterances attributed to Jesus can be paralleled in the utterances of a Confucius or a Buddha. Such allegations are not new, neither do they become more convincing when reiterated by Robertson or Drews ('Die Christusmythe,' p. 197). They might even be true without appreciably affecting the real issue. This question would still demand an answer: How comes it about that within the comparatively narrow limits which the Gospels devote to the teaching of Jesus we have brought together moral and religious sayings which are the quintessence of the finest utterances in Judaism, Confucianism, and Buddhism? Further, how is it that while, even on Professor Drews' own showing, the sayings of Jesus are a worthy parallel to the best which has been said or thought everywhere, we always move on the same high spiritual level without any of the sudden declensions which so often characterize other bodies of teaching? What is the unifying and selecting influence responsible for a

result which astonishes other than Christian readers? One who is familiar with the best Jewish literature, and whose own Jewish belief naturally inclines him to estimate its spiritual value to the full, thus contrasts the teaching of the Gospels with the teaching of the Mosaic Law: 'This Law is, as we know, an amalgam of ritual and morality. It contains the injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," while immediately following that injunction comes the precept, "A garment of two kinds of stuff shall not come upon thee." Both laws were regarded as equally divine. The Code does not give the smallest indication that one set of laws—the moral laws—was intended for all time, while another set was intended for a period only.' ('The Religious Teaching of Jesus,' by C. G. Montefiore, pp. 24-25.) In the face of this attitude with regard to all that the Mosaic Law contains how are we to account for the fact that our Gospels arising in the same religious period when this indiscriminating devotion to the Law obtained, do actually

distinguish between ritual and moral commands in such a way as to make the latter alone of importance and imperative ? Such a change does not first begin of itself but must have a source sufficiently striking and determinative. That is forthcoming in the Gospels in the person of Jesus, from whose lips the teachings fall with psychological fitness. This is evidently the impression received by Mr. Montefiore, and his remarks are worthy of the most careful attention as an adequate reply to Professor Drews' detailed depreciation of Jesus' teachings : ' To each individual striking utterance of Jesus it is likely enough that a good parallel can be found in the Rabbinic literature, but when Jewish scholars adopt this method of disproving the originality of the Gospel, they forget (quite apart from questions of date) the size of the Talmud and Midrashim. The teaching of Jesus is contained in three small books, which do not fill more than sixty-eight double column pages of tolerably small print. The teaching belongs, or is attributed, to one man, and constitutes, in

large measure, a consistent and harmonious whole. It is not a combination of a thousand different occasional and disconnected sayings of a hundred different Rabbis. . . . We have not to neglect a vast quantity of third- and fourth-rate material and seek for occasional pearls amid a mass of negligible trivialities. And, lastly, we must take into consideration . . . not only what Jesus said, but how he said it. The beauty, the distinction, in a word, the genius of the form, must surely be taken into account as well as the excellence of the matter.' ('The Religious Teaching of Jesus,' by C. G. Montefiore, pp. 110-111.) It is precisely because Professor Drews is altogether blind to such characteristics of the reported teaching of Jesus that his criticism thereof is entitled to little serious consideration. On the other hand, he advances no theory which can explain why it is that the teachings do so harmoniously fit together, nor does he account for the fact that when we pass from Mark's Gospel to that of Matthew or Luke the historical person he delineates

impresses us as the only fit and proper speaker of the sayings attributed to him by the later Synoptists. If Mark's narrative satisfies us as affording a sufficient historical basis for the doings of Jesus none the less does the source of the sayings vindicate the claim to preserve an early and reliable account of what the historical Jesus said. Certainly, the retentive Eastern memory would even more easily retain his utterances and without written aid transmit them practically unchanged. Hence, the conclusion which seems fully warranted by the facts is that in Mark and in 'Q' we have primary witnesses which strongly support the belief in the historical Jesus.

IX

Yet there is a further objection which needs to be met. How is it that this supposed historical personality has left so little record of its existence, apart from the writings of Christian believers? That this is so must be at once admitted, although we hope to show that Professor Drews

greatly under-estimates both the amount and the significance of such outside testimony. We are so prone to judge of Christian matters from the point of view of a fully-established and widely-known religion that it seems amazing that that which bulks so largely in our thought and determines so fully the character of our religious consciousness grew out of a very small thing in a very obscure part of the ancient world. It is only when we try to place ourselves at the point of view of an ancient historian of the first century that we understand how to such a one incipient Christianity would seem undeserving of serious attention. The Roman Empire was itself so large and the movements therein so many and so seemingly important that a slight disturbance in Judæa might very well pass unnoticed by such a one. Even Jewish affairs as a whole would scarcely come into his perspective, and at first there was nothing in early Christian thought or practice which enabled an outsider to differentiate them from the Jewish forms tolerated by the Empire.

Moreover, and this is a point often overlooked, it is for the first century of our Christian era that all historical records are very few and fragmentary. Hence it is all the more remarkable that the first Roman historian deserving of attention because of his transmitted works should make what appears a direct reference to the Christian religion and its founder. The writer is Tacitus, and the passage occurs in his *Annals*, written about the year A.D. 115. He is speaking of the fire at Rome which common report attributed to Nero, and continues thus: 'So to stifle the report, Nero put in his own place as culprits and punished with every refinement of cruelty the men whom the common people hated for their secret crimes. They called them Christians. Christ, from whom the name was given, had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pestilent superstition checked for awhile. Afterwards it began to break out afresh, not only in Judæa, where the mischief first arose, but also at Rome, where all sorts of

murder and filthy shame meet together and become fashionable.' The rest of the quotation, which describes the terrible punishment meted out to the unfortunate Christians, does not concern us. But the passage has for two reasons been accepted as one of the most credible of testimonies outside Christian literature to the origin of Christianity. In the first place, it is precisely such a thing as a Roman aristocrat would be likely to say of any plebeian movement which he neither understood nor was the least interested in, except for its connexion with Nero's life and acts. Further, it is written in the style so characteristic of Tacitus. Consequently scarcely any scholar of note has found reason to doubt the authenticity of the passage or failed to realize the value of the evidence. When, therefore, Professor Drews denies both the authenticity as well as the evidential value, we naturally demand weighty reasons for setting aside the generally-held conclusions. But such reasons are not supplied. He again resorts to the explanation of Christian interpolation at a later time, and

in support of this refers to the work of a French writer named Hocart. But although the latter published his conclusions concerning the Neronian Persecution in 1885 they have had little influence and have gained even less approval. Thus, some five years after their appearance the greatest English authority on early Christian history makes this allusion to Hocart's views :—' I need not stop to consider the vagary of Hocart . . . who maintains that the passage in Tacitus relating to the Christians is a medieval interpolation. It will go the way of Father Hardouin's theories that Terence's Plays and Virgil's *Æneid* and Horace's Odes, and I know not what besides, were monkish forgeries ; though it may possibly have a momentary notoriety before its departure.' ('Apostolic Fathers,' by Bishop Lightfoot, vol. 1, p. 75, foot-note.) Professor Drews seems determined to fulfil Lightfoot's prediction, but in spite of his support the theory of interpolation remains a vagary which need not be seriously considered. It would be difficult to find a passage in any ancient

historical work more trustworthy than Tacitus' Christian allusion. What then does the latter establish? Nothing, says Professor Drews, seeing that Tacitus may have been merely repeating the common belief of his day. That this belief existed does not confirm the historical character of the fact reported. This may be readily admitted. But the nature of Tacitus' report makes it at least probable that it is more than mere rumour which prompts his detailed reference, namely, the result of his careful inquiry into that which was the matter of general belief. That he should base so important a part of his narrative upon popular opinion is utterly foreign to his careful historical methods. For this reason it is difficult to refuse great value to Tacitus' passage as an historical witness to the fact that Jesus did really live, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, and was regarded as the historical founder of the Christian faith.

Something must be said concerning Josephus, the Jewish historian, because much is made of his silence about Christ-

ianity by Professor Drews and his supporters. In Josephus' history as we have it there is a famous allusion to Jesus which may be reproduced here :—' At the same time there appeared in Judæa an extraordinary person called Jesus, if it be lawful to call him a man. He was a famous worker of miracles, a teacher of those who were desirous of receiving the truth in simplicity, and brought over to him many disciples, both Jews and Gentiles. This was the Christ whom Pilate, at the accusation of the princes and the great men of the nation, delivered up to the ignominious punishment of the cross, notwithstanding which, those who first loved him did not forsake him. He appeared to them alive again the third day after his crucifixion, which the divine prophets had foretold, together with numberless other wonders concerning him. And thence, to this day, there is a set of people, who bear the name of Christians, as owning him for their Head, Lord, and Master.' (' Antiquities of the Jews,' Book 18, Chapter 4.) The fulness of detail in this account and, even

more, the highly favourable character of the writer's remarks about Jesus himself, have led scholars to the conclusion that this passage is not an original part of the writer's account but is due to some later Christian hand. Hence it cannot be used as historical evidence for the existence of Jesus. But in addition to this long allusion we have two shorter ones important for their bearing upon persons associated with Jesus in the Gospels. The first deals with John the Baptist, and is a careful and accurate account, quite in harmony with what the Gospels report concerning Jesus' forerunner. (*Ibid.*, Book 18, Chapter 7.) The second relates the trial and subsequent death by stoning of 'James the brother of Jesus.' (*Ibid.*, Book 20, Chapter 8.) Upon the trustworthiness of the latter passage Professor Drews casts grave doubts. But on this occasion there is not the same reason for suspecting Christian interpolation. The person of James has no special prominence in the narrative, it is alluded to along with 'some other persons' who share his con-

demnation and death, and the passage is so incidentally introduced into the main account as to create the impression of perfect naturalness. It is in fact the incidental character of the allusion which constitutes its value as an historical witness. Josephus writes his history from a pro-Roman point of view, passing over many things lightly which might seem to reflect upon the justice of the imperial government, and leaving others out which did not lend themselves to such modification. Hence, from his point of view it was not desirable to make much of Christian history or personages. If then in his narrative we come across an incidental allusion to 'James the brother of Jesus' it seems to imply that the latter was well known although the author chooses to pass over his actual career and death in silence.

But arguments founded upon silence are always precarious and frequently dangerous in the hands of those who use them. It is so with regard to Professor Drews' emphasis of the scanty evidence

for Christianity apart from actual Christian writings. Such arguments can be used with equal force and effect against the position which he represents. How is it that while we have fairly full records of the contemporary attacks upon early Christianity we find nowhere any doubt cast upon the historical character of Jesus? Every kind of abuse is employed, every possible means to lessen his personal appeal or discredit his message is thought of, but not once does it occur to any opponent of Christianity to maintain that Jesus of Nazareth was a myth and never really lived. What an invincible and indispensable weapon this would have been to the Jewish adversary! According to Justin Martyr the Jews were the most violent and remorseless of the Church's slanderers and persecutors, yet the Jewish Trypho of his *Dialogue* never once hints that the real existence of the Jesus whose attitude to the Law he deprecates could be called in question. So, too, with regard to Celsus, one of the ablest and most embittered opponents of Christianity in

the second century. While his polemic as a whole is not extant much of its argument can be reconstructed from the reply which it called forth from Origen, one of the greatest of Christian thinkers. Had Celsus known of any reason to doubt the historical character of Jesus it would have been of the strongest support to him in his anti-Christian attack. How noteworthy it then is that while controversy rages around every other point it never once seems to do so around this of the historical existence of Jesus! By friend and foe alike it seems to have been accepted without question, even by those who surely knew something of that Oriental fantasy which, according to Professor Drews, was capable of creating so much.

X

Hence, it would seem to be clear that the case against the historicity of Jesus is not proven and is highly improbable. Professor Drews' book, interesting and well written as it undoubtedly is, need disturb no Christian faith which finds place

for the historical Jesus and regards him as its founder. Into the question whether ideas or historical facts are of superior value for such a foundation we cannot enter. It does not in fact fall within the scope of the present inquiry. But this much may be said : faith appeals not only to ideas for its confirmation, it necessarily asks for the illustration and vindication of those ideas in human experience. Only when they are brought from the realm of the abstract and become visualized in great personalities does their real appeal begin. The teachings of a Socrates would have meant little for the world but for the personality of the man who proclaimed them and was prepared to vindicate their truth by his death. To a far greater extent is this true of Jesus of Nazareth. It meant much for the world that he made the principle of self-sacrifice the keynote of Christianity. It meant still more, however, that he let that principle become evident in a personality whose beauty and inexhaustible charm have ever been the incentive to faith and the stimulus to

human endeavour. He who said to a handful of Galilean peasants, 'Follow me,' has throughout all the subsequent Christian centuries made a like appeal and awakened a like desire to respond. This does not imply that all the details of the historical life of Jesus have been or need to be imitated with careful exactitude. It may have seemed to a St. Francis that such literal imitation was necessary, and that to reproduce in the thirteenth century the actual life which Jesus lived in the first was the supreme duty of the Christian disciple. Not so, however, ought we to regard the actual details of the life in Palestine. Rather need we to turn to the Gospels to see that the principle of self-sacrifice which once vindicated itself under the most difficult of historical conditions, in doing so made clear its claim to recognition as a principle of human life everywhere.

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