

THE THEOSOPHICAL BOOKSHELF



**DID JESUS
LIVE 100 B.C.?**

G. R. S. MEAD

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I. FOREWORD.

WHEN some five and a half centuries before the Christian era the Buddha arose in ancient Aryavarta to substitute actuality for tradition, to break down the barriers of convention, and throw open the Way of Righteousness to all, irrespective of race or birth, we are told that He set aside the ancestral scriptures of His race and times, and preached a Gospel of self-reliance and a freedom from bibliolatry that will ever keep His memory green among the independent thinkers of the world.

When the Christ arose in Judaea, once more to break down the barriers of exclusiveness, and preach the Way to the 'Amme ha-aretz, the rejected of the ceremonialists and legal purists, we are told that He extended the aegis of His

great authority over the ancient writings of His fellow-countrymen, and cited the Torah as the very Law of God Himself.

We are assured by Traditionalists that the Incarnation of Deity Itself, the very Giver of that Law, explicitly attested the genuineness of the Five Books; He, with His inerrant wisdom, asserted that Moses wrote them, just as it was believed by the people of His day.

Whereas, if there be anything certain in the whole field of Biblical research, it is that this cannot be the whole truth of the matter.

It has been said in excuse that the Christ did not come on earth to teach His disciples the "higher criticism." This may well be so, and yet it is a fact of profound significance that, as we shall see in the course of the present enquiry, even in His day this very Torah, and much more the Prophets and Sacred Writings, were called into serious question by many.

If, however, the Christ actually used the words ascribed to Him in this matter, it is difficult to understand why a plan so different in this respect was adopted in the West from the apparently far more drastic attempt that was made so many years before in the East. It may, however, have been found that the effect of a so abrupt departure from tradition had not proved so successful as had been anticipated, for the Brahman, instead of giving of his best, and allowing himself to become the channel of a great spiritual outpouring for the benefit of the world, quickly resumed his ancient position of exclusiveness and spiritual isolation.

So in the case of the Jew, who was, as it were, a like channel ready to hand for the West, whereby the new spiritual forces could most efficaciously be liberated, it may have been thought that if the traditional prejudices of that

"chosen" and "peculiar" people were more gently treated perhaps greater results would follow. But even so the separative forces in human nature were too strong, and the Jew, like the Brahman, fell back; into a more rigid exclusiveness than ever. But the Wisdom behind Her Servants doubtless knew that this would be, and reserved both Brahman and Jew for some future opportunity of greater promise, while She temporarily utilized them, in spite of themselves, and in spite of the mistakes of their Buddhist and Christian brethren; for all of us, Brahmans and Buddhists, Hebrews and Christians, are of like passions, and struggling in the bonds of our self-limitations and ignorance; we are all children of one Mother, our common human nature, and of one Father, the divine source of our being.

It may have been that in the first place the great Teacher of the West made His appeal to the "Brahmans" of Jewry, and only when He found that no impression could be made upon their rigid adherence to rules and customs, did he go to the people. There are many Sayings strongly opposed to Legalism, as understood by subsequent Rabbinical orthodoxy, and, as we shall see, there were many mystic circles in the early days, even on what was considered "the ground of Judaism," which not only rejected the authority of the Prophets and Sacred Writings, but even called into question the Torah proper in much of its contents. Moreover, we find that Jesus was, among other things, called by the adherents of orthodox Rabbinism a "Samaritan," a name which connoted "heresy" in general for the strict Jew, but which, as we shall see, seems to the student of history sometimes to stand merely for one who held less exclusive views.

However all this may be, and whatever was attempted or hoped for at the beginning, the outcome was that until

about the end of the first century the Christians regarded the documents of the Palestinian canon as their only Holy Scripture, and when they began to add to this their own sacred writings, they still clung to the "Books" of Jewry, and regarded them with the same enthusiastic reverence as the Rabbis themselves. The good of it was that a strong link of East with West was thus forged; the evil, that the authority of this library of heterogeneous legends and myths, histories and ordinances, the literature of a peculiar people, and the record of their special evolution, was taken indiscriminately as being of equal weight with the more liberal and, so to speak, universalizing views of the new movement. Moreover, every moment of the evolution of the idea of God in Jewry was taken as a full revelation, and the crude and revengeful Yahweh of a semi-barbarous stage equated with the evolved Yahweh of the mystic and humanitarian.

For good or ill Christianity has to this day been bound up with this record of ancient Judaism. The Ancestors of the Jew have become for the Christian the glorified Patriarchs of humanity, who beyond all other men walked with God. The Biblical history of the Jew is regarded as the making straight in the desert of human immorality and paganism of a highway for the Lord of the Christians. Jesus, who is worshipped by the Christians as God, so much so that the cult of the Father has from the second century been relegated to an entirely subordinate position—Jeschu ha-Notzri was a Jew.

On the other hand we have to-day before us in the Jews the strange and profoundly interesting phenomenon of a nation without a country, scattered throughout the world, planted in the midst of every Christian nation, and yet strenuously rejecting the faith which Christendom holds to be the saving grace of humanity. Even as the Brahmanists were

the means of sending forth Buddhism into the world, and then, by building up round themselves a stronger wall of separation than ever, cut themselves off from the new endeavour, so were the Jews the means of launching Christianity into the world, and then, by hedging themselves round with an impermeable legal fence, shut themselves entirely from the new movement. In both cases the ancient blood-tie and the idea of a religion for a nation triumphed over time and every other modifying force.

What, then, can be of profounder interest than to learn what the Jews have said concerning Jesus and Christianity? And yet how few Christians today know anything of this subject; how few have the remotest conception of the traditions of Jewry concerning the founder of their faith! For so many centuries have they regarded Jesus as God, and everything concerning Him, as set apart in the history of the world, as unique and miraculous, that to find Him treated of as a simple man, and that too as one who misled the children of His people, appears to the believer as the rankest blasphemy. Least of all can such a mind realize even faintly that the claims of the Church on behalf of Jesus have ever been thought, and are still thought, by the followers of the Torah to be equally the extreme of blasphemy, most solemnly condemned by the first and foremost of the commandments which the pious Jew must perforce believe came straight from God Himself.

Astonishing, therefore, as it appears, though Jew and Christian use the same Scripture in common, with regard to their fundamental beliefs they stand over against each other in widest opposition; and the man who sincerely loves his fellows, who feels his kinship with man as man, irrespective of creed, caste, or race, stands aghast at the contradictions revealed by the warring elements in our common human nature, and is dismayed at the infinite

opposition of the powers he sees displayed in his brethren and feels potential in himself.

But, thank God, to-day we are in the early years of the twentieth century, when a deeper sense of human kinship is dawning on the world, when the general idea of God is so evolved that we dare no longer clothe Him in the tawdry rags of human passions, or create Him in the image of our ignorance, as has been mostly the case for so many sorrowful centuries. We are at last beginning to learn that God is at least as highly developed as a wise and just mortal; we refuse to ascribe to Deity a fanaticism and jealousy, an inhumanity and mercilessness, of which we should be heartily ashamed in ourselves. There are many to-day who would think themselves traitors to their humanity, much more to the divinity latent within them, were they to make distinctions between Jew or Christian, Brahman or Buddhist, or between all or any of these and the Confucian, or Mohammedan, or Zoroastrian. They are all our brethren, children of a common parent, these say. Let the dead past bury its dead, and let us follow the true humanity hidden in the hearts of all.

But how to do this so long as records exist? How to do this while we each glory in the heredity of our bodies, and imagine that it is the spiritual ancestry of our souls? What is it that makes a man cling to the story of his "fathers," fight for it, and identify himself with all its natural imperfections and limitations? Are not these rather, at any rate on the ground of religion, in some fashion the "parents" we are to think little of, to "hate," as one of the "dark sayings" ascribed to the Christ has it?

Why should a Jew of to-day, why should a Christian of the early years of the twentieth century, identify himself with the hates of years gone by? What have we to do with the

bitter controversies of Church Fathers and Talmudic Rabbis; what have we to do with the fierce inhumanity of mediaeval inquisitors, or the retorts of the hate of persecuted Jewry? Why can we not at last forgive and forget in the light of the new humanism which education and mutual intercourse is shedding on the world?

Wise indeed are the words: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And yet in theology all the trouble is about this God whom we have not seen. Theology, which ought to be a help and a comfort, becomes the greatest scourge of humanity, for in theology we do not say this or that is true because the present facts of nature and human consciousness testify to its truth, but this is true because many years ago God declared it was so—a thing we can never know on the plane of our present humanity, and a declaration which, as history proves, has led to the bitterest strife and discord in the past, and which is still to-day a serious obstacle to all progress in religion.

When, then, we take pen in hand to review part of the history of this great strife between Christian and Jew in days gone by, we do so because we have greater faith in present-day humanity than in the inhumanity of the past.. Let us agree to seek an explanation, to confer together, to sink our pride in our own opinion, and discover why we are enemies, one of another, in things theological, while we are friends perchance in things scientific and philosophic.

But this book is not intended for the man whose "Christianity" is greater than his humanity, nor for him whose "Judaism" is stronger than his love of humankind; it is not meant for the theologian who loves his preconceptions more than truth, or for the fanatic who

thinks he is the only chosen of God. It is a book for men and women who have experience of life and human nature, who have the courage to face things as they are; who know that on the one hand the Churches of to-day, no matter how they strive carefully to disguise the fact, are confronted by the gravest possible difficulties as to doctrine, while many of the clergy, owing to a total lack of wise guidance by those in authority, are becoming a law unto themselves, or, because of the terrorism of ecclesiastical laymen, are forced to be hypocrites in the pulpit; and, on the other hand, that Judaism cannot continue in its traditional mould without doing the utmost violence to its intelligence.

Traditional theology, traditional history, traditional views in general are being questioned on all hands, and there is an ever-growing conviction that the consciousness and conscience of a Church, whether that Church be the Congregation of Christendom or the Dispersion of Israel, evolve from century to century; that religion is not an exception to the law which is seen to be operative in every department of nature and human activity; and that, therefore, it is incumbent upon all who have the best interests of religion at heart "to maintain the right and duty of [any] Church to restate her belief from time to time, as required by the progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit," as one of the objects of the Churchmen's Union declares.

To-day, in thinking and progressive Christendom, we have before us the spectacle of the mind and heart of the earnest seeker after truth torn and lacerated by the contradictions and manifest absurdities of much in the tradition of the Faith. The only relief from this most painful state of affairs is to be found in the courageous recognition, that in the early days the marvelous mysteries of the inner life and the inner nature of man were objectivized and historicized by those who either did not understand their true spiritual

import, or who deliberately used this method for the instruction of the many who were unable to grasp in their proper terms the spiritual verities of man in his perfecting. To this we will return at the end of our present enquiry and endeavour to show how even Jew and Christian can learn to understand and respect each other even on the ground of religion.

And, indeed, the time is very opportune, for some of the preliminary conditions for a better understanding are being prepared. To-day there is being given to the world for the first time what purports to be "a faithful record of the multifarious activity" of the Jewish people. The Israelite has been a mystery to the Christian, a mystery to humanity, from generation to generation; he has lived in our midst, and we have not known him, nay, we have been content to believe anything of him, while he for the most part has been inarticulate as to himself, his hopes, and his fears. The Jewish Encyclopaedia is to remedy this evil, for it sets before itself the endeavour "to give, in systematized, comprehensive, and yet succinct form, a full and accurate account of the history and literature, the social and intellectual life of the Jewish people, of their ethical and religious views, their customs, rites, and traditions in all ages and in all lands."

Such a work is an undertaking of the most profound interest and importance, and we look forward to its publication with the liveliest anticipation, asking ourselves the questions: What will the Jew in this comprehensive Encyclopaedia have to tell us of Christianity? How will he treat the traditions of his fathers concerning Jesus? To-day we can no longer burn or torture him or confiscate his goods. His account of himself, moreover, is to be given by the best intelligence in him. What, then, will he say

concerning Jesus and the long centuries of bitter strife between the Christians and his own people?

From the three volumes which have so far appeared it is not possible to answer this question; but that it is the question of all questions in Jewish affairs that demands a wise answer, will be seen from our present enquiry. To ignore it, or merely to confine it to vague generalities, is of no advantage to the world.

As the New Testament was added to the Old Covenant Bible by the Church Fathers, and formed the basis of their exegesis, so was the Talmud added to the Torah by the Rabbis, and formed the special study of later Jewry. The Talmud covers the whole period of the early Christian centuries. What has the Talmud to say of Christianity? For as the editors of the Encyclopaedia well say:

"The Talmud is a world of its own, awaiting the attention of the modern reader. In its encyclopaedic compass it comprises all the variety of thought and opinions, of doctrine and science, accumulated by the Jewish people in the course of more than seven centuries, and formulated for the most part by their teachers. Full of the loftiest spiritual truths and of fantastic imagery, of close and learned legal disquisitions and of extravagant exegesis, of earnest doctrine and of minute casuistry, of accurate knowledge and of popular conceptions, it invites the world of to-day to a closer acquaintance with its voluminous contents."

To-day it is becoming a canon of historical research that the study of ancient history can hardly ever reward us by the attainment of incontrovertible fact; it can at best only tell us what the opinions of certain writers were about the facts of which we are in search. Many years of study of Christian

origins have convinced some of us that it is impossible to be absolutely certain historically of any objective fact relating to the life of Jesus as handed on by tradition. We can only say that this or that seems more likely to have occurred; and here again our preference, if we trace it deep enough, will be found to depend entirely on subjective considerations. Canonical Christianity gradually evolved the mind-bewildering dogma that Jesus was in deed and truth very God of very God, unique and miraculous in every possible respect; and the Church for some seventeen or eighteen centuries has boldly thrown down this challenge to the intellect and experience of humanity. Strong in the strength of her faith in miracle she has triumphed in her theology, and imposed it on the West even until the present day; but at last she has herself developed an intellect which can no longer fully believe in this. A new spirit is at work in her children, who are busily trying to convince their mother that she has been mistaken in many things, and has often misunderstood the wisdom of the Master.

It is because of this stupendous claim on behalf of a claim which has perhaps astonished none more than Himself, that the Church has brought upon herself a scrutiny into the history of her origins that it is totally unable to bear. Every single assertion about her great Teacher is scrutinized with a minuteness that is not demanded in the case of any other historical problem, and the lay student who follows the researches of specialists meets with so many contradictions in the analysis of the traditional data, and is brought face to face with so many warring opinions, that he is in despair of arriving at any patent historic certainty on any single point in the Evangelical record. Nevertheless he is confronted by the unavoidable fact that a great religion came to birth; and, if he be not an out and out five-sense rationalist, his only relief lies in the belief that the secret of this birth must have been hidden in a

psychic womb, and the real history of the movement must therefore be sought in some great drama that was enacted in the unseen world.

But the interest in the problem is by no means lessened because of the historical uncertainty; on the contrary it is a thousand-fold increased. The subject can never be made solely a matter of dry historical research; it will always be involved in the most profoundly instructive psychological phenomena, and that too not only in the study of the minds of the ancient writers, but also in the appreciation of the preconceptions of their modern critics. Hence it is that any book dealing with the question of Christian origins is before all others a human document from which, no matter what view a man may take, there is always something to be learned of our complex human nature.

And with regard to our present enquiry, what can be of greater interest than to observe how that from the same facts, whatever those facts may have been, on the one hand, under the expansive influence of love, wonder, credulity, and intense religious enthusiasm, there was evolved the story of God Himself uniquely incarnate in man; while on the other, from feelings of annoyance, of surprise, and disbelief, and, later, of hate, bred of an equal enthusiasm for religion, there was built up the story of a deceiver of Israel? Here we see evolved, generation by generation, and side by side, absolutely contradictory representations purporting to be the accounts of the doings and sayings of one and the same person.

The philosophic mind can thus derive much food for reflexion by a comparison of the Christian and Jewish traditions concerning Jesus, and his studies will lead him to understand how that a thing which may be perfectly true psychically or spiritually, and of great help to the religious

life, can, when taken out of its proper sphere, and aggressively asserted as a purely physical and historical fact, be turned into a subject of grossest material controversy. Thus it may be that we shall be able to estimate, at their just values, some things which cannot but appear extremely shocking to conventional religious minds, and be able to understand how what was regarded by the one side as a saving truth, could be regarded by the other as a mischievous error; how what was declared by the Christians to be the highest honour, could be regarded by the Jew as a proof of dishonour; how what was believed in by the former as the historic facts of a unique divine revelation, could be treated disparagingly, or with mockery and even humour, by those who held to the tradition of what they believed to have been equally a unique revelation of the Divine.

But it is not the doctrinal quarrels which chiefly interest us in studying these traditions of Jewry. What, in our opinion, is of far greater interest is that the Jewish traditions, in spite of some gross contradictions, in the main assign a date to Jesus which widely differs from that of Christian tradition. The main object of this enquiry is to state this problem, to show that in moderate probability for many centuries this was the Jewish tradition as to the date of Jesus, not to attack or defend it. Moreover, we have taken up this subject not only on general grounds of interest, but also for a special reason.

For this problem, though not as yet even heard of by the general public, is, nevertheless, of great interest to many students of Theosophy, and, therefore, it seems to press, not for solution—for of that there are no immediate hopes—but for a more satisfactory definition than has been as yet accorded to it.

The problem, then, we are about to attempt more clearly to define is not a metaphysical riddle, not a spiritual enigma, not some moral puzzle (though all of these factors may be made to inhere in it), but a problem of physical fact, well within the middle distance of what is called the historic period. It is none the less on this account of immense importance and interest generally, and especially to thoughtful students of "origins," for it raises no less a question than that of an error in the date of the life of the Founder of Christianity; and that, too, not by the comparatively narrow margin of some seven or eight years (as many have already argued on the sole basis of generally accepted traditional *data*), but by no less a difference than the (in such a connection) enormous time-gulf of a full century. Briefly, the problem may be popularly summed up in the startling and apparently ludicrous question: Did Jesus live 100 B.C.?

Now, had all such questioning been confined to a small circle of first-hand investigators of the hidden side of things, or, if we may say so, of the noumena of things historic underlying the blurred records of phenomena handed down to us by tradition, there would be no immediate necessity for the present enquiry; but of late years very positive statements on this matter, based on such methods of research, have been printed and circulated among those interested in such questions; and what, in the opinion of the writer, makes the matter even more pressing, is that these statements are being readily accepted by ever-growing numbers. Now, it goes without saying, that the majority of those who have accepted such statements have done so either for subjective reasons satisfactory to themselves, or from some inner feeling or impression which they have not been at pains to analyse. The state of affairs, then, seems clearly to demand, that as they have heard a little of the matter, they should now hear

more, and that the question should be taken out of the primitive crudeness of a choice between two sets of mutually contradictory assertions, and advanced a stage into the subtler regions of critical research. As far as the vast majority of the general public who may chance to stumble on the amazing question which heads our enquiry, is concerned, it is only to be expected that they will answer it offhand not only with an angry No, but with the further reflection that the very formulating of such a query betokens the vagaries of a seriously disordered mind; indeed, at the outset of our investigations we were also ourselves decidedly of the opinion that no mind trained in historic research, even the most cautious, would hesitate for a moment to sum up the probabilities of the accessible evidence as pointing to a distinct negative. But when all is said and done, we find ourselves in a position of doubt between, on the one hand, the seeming impossibility of impugning the genuineness of the Pilate date, and on the other, an uncomfortable feeling that the nature of the inconsistencies of the Hebrew tradition rather strengthens than diminishes the possibility that there may be something after all in what appears to be its most insistent factor—namely, that Jesus lived in the days of Jannai.

It is not, then, with any hopes of definitely solving the problem that these pages are written, but rather with the object of pointing out the difficulties which have to be surmounted by an unprejudiced historian, before on the one hand he can rule such a question entirely out of court, or on the other can permit himself to give even a qualified recognition to such a revolutionary proposition in the domain of Christian origins; and further, of trying to indicate by an object lesson what appears to me to be the sane attitude of mind with regard to similar problems, which those of us who have had some experience of the

possibilities of so-called occult research, but who have not the ability to study such matters at first-hand, should endeavour to hold.

In what is set forth in this essay, then, I hope most honestly to endeavour to treat the matter without prejudice, save for this general prepossession, that I consider it saner for the only normally endowed individual to hold the mind in suspense over all categorical statements which savour in any way of the nature of "revelation," by whomsoever made, than to believe either on the one hand without investigation, or on the other in despair of arriving at any real bed-rock of facts in the unsubstantial material commonly believed in as history, and thus in either case to crystallise one's mind anew into some "historic" form, on lines of evidence concerning the nature of which we are as yet almost entirely ignorant.

And, first of all, let me further set forth very briefly some of the considerations which render it impossible for me to assume either a decidedly negative, or even a purely agnostic, attitude with regard to possibilities of research other than those open to normal ability and industry; for if a man would honestly endeavour, in any fashion really satisfactory to himself, to interpret the observed phenomena of life, he is compelled by a necessity greater than himself to take into consideration all the facts of at least his personal experience, no matter how sceptical he may be as to the validity of the experiences of others, or how critical he may be concerning his own. On the other hand, I most freely admit that those who have not had experiences similar to my own, are quite justified in assuming an agnostic attitude with regard to my declarations, but I doubt that it can be considered the nature of a truly scientific mind to deny *a priori* the

possibility of my experience, or merely contemptuously to dismiss the matter without any attempt at investigation.

It has been my good fortune—for so I regard it—to know a number of people who have their subtler senses, to a greater or less degree, more fully developed than is normally the case, and also to be intimate with a few whose power of response to extra-normal ranges of impression, vibration, or stimulation (or whatever may be the more correct term) may be said to be, as far as my experience goes, highly developed. These latter are my personal friends, whom I have known for many years, and with whom I have been most closely associated.

From long knowledge of their characters, often under very trying circumstances, I have no reason to believe they are trying to deceive me, and every reason to believe in their good faith. They certainly would have nothing to gain by practising, if it were possible, any concerted imposition upon me, and everything to lose. For, on the one hand, my devotion to the studies I pursue, and the work upon which I am engaged, is entirely independent of individuals and their pronouncements, and, on the other, my feeling of responsibility to humanity in general is such, that I should not have the slightest hesitation in openly proclaiming a fraud, were I to discover any attempt at it, especially in matters which I hold to be more than ordinarily sacred for all who profess to be lovers of truth and labourers for our common welfare. Nor again is there any question here of their trying to influence some prospective "follower," either of themselves, or of some particular sect, for we are more or less contemporaries in similar studies, and one of our common ideals is the desirability of breaking down the boundary walls of sectarianism.

Now, this handful of friends of mine who are endowed in this special fashion are unanimous in declaring that "Jeschu," the historical Jesus, lived a century before the traditional date. They, one and all, claim that, if they turn their attention to the matter, they can see the events of those far-off days passing before their mind's eye, or, rather, that for the time being they seem to be in the midst of them, even as we ordinarily observe events in actual life. They state that not only do their individual researches as to this date work out to one and the same result, but that also when several of them have worked together, checking one another, the result has been still the same.

Familiar as I am with the hypotheses of "collective hallucination," "honest self-deception," and "subjectivism" of all kinds, I have been unable to satisfy myself that any one of these, or any combination of them, will satisfactorily explain the matter. For instance, even granting that certain of the Jewish Jesus stories may have been previously known to some of my colleagues, and that it might be reasonably supposed that this curious tradition had so fascinated their imagination as to become the determining factor in what might be called their subjective dramatising faculty—there are two considerations which, in my opinion, based on my own knowledge and experience, considerably weaken the strength of this sceptical and otherwise apparently reasonable supposition.

First, the general consideration that my friends differ widely from each other in temperament; they are mostly of different nationalities, and all vary considerably in their objective knowledge of Christian origins, and in their special views of external Christianity. Moreover—though they all sincerely endeavour to be impartial on so important a matter, seeing that it touches the life of a Master for whom they have in a very real sense the deepest reverence

—while some of them do not happen to be special followers of this particular Teacher, others, on the contrary, are specially attracted by this Way, and might, therefore, be naturally expected to counteract in the interest of received tradition any tendency to apparent extravagance, which was not justified by repeated subjective experiences of such a nature as to outweigh their objective training and natural preconceptions.

Second, the very special consideration, that I have had the opportunity on many occasions of testing the accuracy of some of my colleagues with regard to statements either of a similar nature or of a more personal character. And lest my evidence on this point should be too hastily put out of court by some impatient reader, let me briefly refer to the nature of such verification.

But before doing so, it would be as well to have it understood that the method of investigation to which I am referring does not bring into consideration any question of trance, either self-induced, or mesmerically or hypnotically effected. As far as I can judge, my colleagues are to all outward seeming in quite their normal state. They go through no outward ceremonies, or internal ones for that matter, nor even any outward preparation but that of assuming a comfortable position; moreover, they not only describe, as each normally has the power of description, what is passing before their inner vision in precisely the same fashion as one would describe some objective scene, but they are frequently as surprised as their auditors that the scenes or events they are attempting to explain are not at all as they expected to see them, and remark on them as critically, and frequently as sceptically, as those who cannot "see" for themselves, but whose knowledge of the subject from objective study may be greater than theirs.

Now, although it is true that in the majority of cases I have not been able to check their statements, and doubt whether it will ever be possible to do so owing to the lack of objective material, nevertheless, in a number of instances, few when compared with the mass of statements made, but numerous enough in themselves, I have been able to do so. It can, of course, be argued, as has been done in somewhat similar cases, that all of this is merely the bringing into subjective objectivity the imaginative dramatisation of facts which have been normally heard or read, or even momentarily glanced at, and which have sunk beneath the threshold of consciousness, either of that of the seers themselves or of one or other of their auditors, or even some permutation or combination of these. But such an explanation, seems somewhat feeble to one who, like myself, has taken down laboriously dictated passages from MSS., described, for instance, as written in archaic Greek uncials—MSS., the contents of which, as far as I am aware, are not known to exist—passages laboriously dictated letter by letter, by a friend whose knowledge of the language extended hardly beyond the alphabet. Occasionally gaps had to be left for certain forms of letters, with which not only my colleague, but also myself, were previously entirely unacquainted; these gaps had to be filled up afterwards, when the matter was transcribed and broken up into words and sentences, which turned out to be in good construable Greek, the original or copy of which, I am as sure as I can be of anything, neither my colleague nor myself had ever seen physically. Moreover, I have had dates and information given by these methods which I could only verify afterwards by long and patient research, and which, I am convinced, no one but a widely read scholar of classical antiquity could have come across.

This briefly is the nature of some of the facts of my personal experience in this connection, and while others

who have not had such experience may permissibly put it aside, I am unable to do so; and not only am I unable to do so personally, but I further consider it more honest to my readers to admit them to my privacy in this respect, in order that they may be in a better position to estimate the strength or weakness of my preconceptions or prejudices in the treatment of the exceedingly interesting problem which we are about to consider.

It will thus be seen at the outset that I am unable, *a priori* to refuse any validity to these so-called occult methods of research; the ghost of my repeated experience rises up before me and refuses to be laid by an impatient "pshaw." But it by no means follows that, because in some instances I have been enabled to verify the truth of my colleagues' statements, I am therefore justified in accepting the remainder on trust. Of their good faith I have no question, but of the nature of the *modus* of their "seeing" I am in almost complete ignorance. That it is of a more subtle nature than ordinary sight, or memory, or even imagination, I am very well assured; but that there should be entrusted to an apparently favoured few, and that, too, comparatively suddenly, a means of inerrant knowledge which seemingly reduces the results of the unwearied toil of the most laborious scholars and historians to the most beggarly proportions, I am not prepared at present to accept. It would rather seem more scientific to suppose that, in exact proportion to the startling degree of accuracy that may at times be attained by these subtle methods of research, the errors that may arise can be equally appalling.

And, indeed, this is borne out not only by the perusal of the little studied, but enormous, literature on such subjects, both of antiquity and of the present day, but also by the repeated declarations of those of my colleagues themselves

who have endeavoured to fit themselves for a truly scientific use of such faculties. They all declare that their great aim is to eliminate as far as possible the personal factor; for if, so to say, the glass of their mind-stuff, through which they have to see, is not most accurately polished and adjusted, the things seen are all blurred, or distorted into the most fantastic shapes. This "glass" is in itself of a most subtle nature, most plastic and protean; it changes with every desire, with every hope and fear, with every prejudice and prepossession, with every love and hate.

Such factors, then, are not unthought of by my colleagues; rather are they most carefully considered. But this being so, it is plain that it is very difficult to discover a sure criterion of accuracy in such subtle research, even for the practised seer, or seeress, who is willing to submit himself to the strictest discipline; while for those of us who have not developed these distinct inner senses, but who desire eventually to arrive at some certain criterion of truth, and who further believe that this is a thing beyond all sensation, we must be content to develop our critical faculties on the material accessible to us, and do all we can with it before we abandon the subject to "revelation."

Nor is this latter attitude of mind opposed to the best interests of religion; for, if we are in any way right in our belief, we hold that the workman is only expected to work with his own tools. To use in an expanded sense a phrase of the "Gita," there should be no "confusion of castes"; or to employ the language of one of the Gospel parables, a man should lay out the "talent" entrusted to him to the best advantage, and if he do this, no more for the moment, we may believe, is expected of him. We have all, each in our own way, to labour for the common good; but a workman whose trade is that of objective historical research is rarely trusted with the tools of seership as well, while the seer

presumably is not expected to devote his life to historical criticism. Doubtless there may be some who are entrusted with two or more talents of different natures, but so far we have not as yet in our own times come across the desirable blend of a competent seer and a historical critic.

We must, then, each of us in his own way, work together for righteousness; hoping that if in the present we employ our single talents rightly, and prove ourselves profitable servants, we may in the future become masters of two or even more "cities," and thus (to adapt the wording of a famous agraphon) having proved ourselves trustworthy in the "lesser," be accorded the opportunity of showing ourselves faithful in the "greater (mysteries)."

Having, then, prefaced our enquiry by these brief remarks on the nature of the methods of research employed by those whose statements have lately brought this question into prominence in certain circles, we proceed to enumerate the various deposits of objective material which have to be surveyed and analysed, before a mind accustomed to historical study and the weighing of evidence can feel in a position to estimate even approximately the comparative values of the various traditions.

We have, then, in the first place to consider the Christian tradition that Jesus was born in the reign of Herod, and was put to death under Pontius Pilate, and further, to glance at the material from Pagan sources claimed to substantiate this tradition; in the second to acquaint ourselves with the Talmud Jeschu stories which purport to preserve traditions of the life and date of Jeschu totally at variance on almost every point with the Christian account; further to investigate the Toldoth Jeschu or mediaeval Jewish Jesus legends; and lastly to consider some very curious passages

in the writings of the Church Father Epiphanius of Salamis.

That there are many better equipped and more competent than myself to discuss these difficult subjects, no one is more keenly aware than I am. But seeing that there are no books on the subject readily accessible to the general reader, I may be excused for coming forward, not with the pretension of discovering any facts previously unknown to specialists, but with the very modest ambition of attempting some new combinations of some of the best-known of such facts, while generally indicating some of the outlines of the question for those who cannot find the information for themselves, and of pointing to a few of the difficulties which confront a student of the labours of these specialists, in the hope that some greater mind may at no distant date be induced to throw further light on the matter.

Finally, seeing that in the treatment of the Jewish Jeschu stories many things exceedingly distasteful to lovers of Jesus will have to be referred to, and that generally, in the whole enquiry, many points involved in the most violent controversy will have to be considered, let me say that I would most gladly have avoided them if it were possible. But a greater necessity than personal likes or dislikes compels the setting forth of the whole matter as it is found. We are told that the truth alone shall make us free; and the love of it compels us sometimes to deal with most distasteful matters. Few things can be more displeasing than to be even the indirect means of giving pain to the sincere lovers of a great Teacher, but the necessities of the enquiry into the question: Did Jesus live 100 B.C.?— primarily involves a discussion of the Jewish Jeschu stories, and it is therefore impossible to omit them.

II.— THE CANONICAL DATE OF JESUS.

THOSE who are familiar with the history of the innumerable controversies which have raged round the question of Christian origins, are aware that some of the disputants, appalled by the mass of mythic and mystic elements in the Gospel narratives, and dismayed at the contradictions in the apparently most simple data furnished by the evangelists, have not only not hesitated to reject the whole account as devoid of the slightest historical value, but have even gone so far as to deny that Jesus of Nazareth ever existed. Most of these writers had presumably devoted much labour and thought to the subject before they reached a so startling conclusion; but I am inclined to think that their minds were of such a type that, even had they found less contradiction in the purely objective data of the Gospel documents, they would probably have still held the same opinion. Not only was their historic sense so distressed by the vast objective element with which it was confronted such that it could find relief only in the most strenuous efforts to reduce the historic validity of the residue to zero, but it found itself strongly confirmed in this determination by the fact that it could discover no scrap of unassailable external evidence, either in presumed contemporary literature, or even in the literature of the next two generations, whereby not merely the soberest incidents recounted by the Gospel writers, but even the very existence of Jesus, could be substantiated.

Though this extreme view, that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, has perhaps to-day fewer adherents than it had some twenty years ago, the numbers of those who hold that the ideal picture of Jesus painted by the Gospel writers bears but a remote resemblance to its historical original,

not only as to the doings, but also to a lesser extent as to the sayings, have increased so enormously that they can no longer be classed merely as a school, but must rather be considered as expressing a vast volume of educated opinion strongly influencing the thought of the times.

True, there is still a wide divergence of opinion on innumerable other points which are continually issuing into greater and greater prominence as the evolution of criticism proceeds. There is, however, no longer any necessity for the unfortunate student to make up his mind between what appeared to be the devil of undisguised antagonism on the one side and the deep sea of inerrant orthodox traditionalism on the other.

The problem is far more complex, far more subtle, and far greater numbers are interested in it. Whereas in the old days a mere handful, comparatively, had the hardihood to venture between the seeming devil and the deep, to-day not only every theological student, but every intelligent enquirer, is forced to seek his information in the most recent books of reference available—books in which he finds that not only are innumerable questions raised on all sides concerning matters which were previously regarded as settled for all time, but also that opposing views are frankly and freely discussed.

The devil and the deep have almost faded away, and none but minds strongly prejudiced by anachronistic methods of training can discern the ancient crudity of their lineaments with any great distinctness. Concessions have been made on all sides; there is a studied moderation of language and a courtesy in treating the views of opponents which remove controversy from the cockpit of theological invective into the serener air of impersonal debate.

But how fares it with the thoughtful layman who is not sufficiently skilled in scholarly fence to appreciate the niceties of the sword-play of those who are presumably on either side seeking indirectly to win his applause? He is naturally exceedingly confused amid all the detail, and for the most part presumably applauds the view which best suits his preconceptions. But this much he gleans on all sides—a general impression that the ancient tyranny of an inerrant traditionalism is on its death-bed; he is assured that many of its bonds have been already struck from his limbs, and he lives in hope that before long he will be entirely free to try to realise what the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth may mean.

If he take up such recent works as the "Dictionary of the Bible," the "Encyclopaedia Biblica," and the "Jewish Encyclopaedia," he finds that, although in Old Testament subjects tradition has to all intents and purposes been practically almost abandoned by all scholars, in the treatment of New Covenant documents his authorities in the two former works still display a marked difference. The tendency of the contributors to the first above-mentioned work is still on fundamental points, as might very well be expected, conservative and largely apologetic of tradition (though by no means so aggressively so as has been the case in the past), while that of the essayists of the second is emphatically advanced, that is to say, departs widely from tradition, and in most cases breaks with it so entirely that even a reader who has not the slightest theological timidity is surprised at their hardihood.

The non-specialist is thus for the first time enabled to hear both sides distinctly on all points, and so to gain an intimate acquaintance with the arguments for and against traditionalism. And though he may not be able positively to decide on any special view as to details, or even as to the

main fundamental points, he cannot fail to be vastly instructed and greatly relieved. For whatever may be the exact truth of the matter, this much he learns from the general tone of all the writers, that he is no longer thought to be in danger of losing his immortal soul if he find it impossible to believe in the inerrancy of tradition.

It results, then, that the ordinary reader is left without any certain guide in these matters; the old style of Bible repository which told you exactly what to believe, and whose end was edification, is entirely foreign to the spirit of our latest books of reference. But though the reader is left without a guide (if external authority selected to suit a pre-conceived view can ever be a truly spiritual guide), he is inevitably thrown back on himself and made to think, and *that* is the beginning of a new era in general Christian instruction.

Such, then, is the general state of affairs brought about by the pronouncements of the occupants of the principal teaching chairs in Protestant Christendom; and it is very evident that among their manifold pronouncements a man can find learned authority for almost any view he may choose to hold. He may, for instance, so select his authorities that he can arrive at the general conclusion that there is not a single document in the New Testament collection which is genuine in the old sense of the word; he may even go further and refuse to be tied down to any particular "source" as genuine, seeing that there is such a diversity of opinion as to what are the precise sources. But if, while taking this critical attitude with regard to the canonical contents of Christian tradition, he would adopt a positive view on a point entirely negatived by that tradition, to retain his consistency he is bound to try to discover some strong ground for so doing. Now, if we search the two great works to which we have referred for any authority in