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# The Evangelical Quarterly

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## THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

THE religion of our Lord Jesus Christ rests upon an adequate historical foundation. Christianity welcomes all the light that genuine history affords, convinced that any new knowledge can only make the truth of this fact more evident. The purpose of this paper, then, is to indicate briefly the historical method by which this certainty of the Church's faith may be attained and inculcated.

The approach may be made in two ways—negatively and positively. Negatively we consider the effort which radicalism has made to eliminate the Divine Christ and substitute in lieu thereof a purely human Jesus, and notice the failure of that effort.

Perhaps the most important volume presenting the endeavour to find a purely human Jesus, stripped of His divine glory and the monumental miracles of His power, is Dr. Albert Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer begins by acknowledging that there are few characters in history about whom we possess so much indubitable historical information as we have concerning Jesus. Further, he acknowledges that Jesus is not depicted, like Socrates, by the literati (Plato and Xenophon) to show their literary gifts; but that the portraiture of Jesus has been drawn by simple Christians without literary gifts. In spite of these facts, Schweitzer insists that the canons of ordinary historical science are here inadequate and its methods not immediately applicable. In the case of Jesus alone he justifies a resort to historical intuition, that is to hypercriticism.

Then Dr. Schweitzer traces the efforts which German rationalistic criticism has made for the last one hundred and fifty years to reconstruct the historical Jesus. But by the historical Jesus these negative critics mean a Jesus who was a mere man, a Jesus who was like other characters of history, a Jesus who must be explicable by psychology and environmental factors. This

<sup>1</sup> An example of an American monograph presenting a purely natural Jesus is to be found in Dr. S. J. Case's *Jesus—A New Biography*, Chicago.

critical movement first sets up a naturalistic frame which it calls *historicism*; and then endeavours to paint a Jesus small enough to fit this puny frame. These critics start with the presupposition that the supernatural cannot have happened; that God did not become incarnate; that the history of time-space is wholly relative and has never been invaded by the Absolute.

Well, what results have come from the tremendous output of energy on the part of exhaustive German scholarship? If one-tenth of the monographs which they have written on Jesus had been written on any other historical person, we would possess a mass of assured results—we would know that person beyond a peradventure. What are the assured results of this chapter in German historical research? Have the naturalistic critics arrived at a picture of a purely human Jesus which they themselves are agreed upon, which they can plausibly affirm is historical, and which offers a reasonable historical account of the beginnings of the Christian movement? If you had to sum up the assured results of Schweitzer's survey in one word, that word would almost have to be "nothing."<sup>1</sup> These critics are hopelessly disagreed as to the fundamental life principle of their little Jesus. Some are certain he was a teacher of ethics, the propounder of the social gospel—a social and political programme that would renovate the conditions of the world. Others are absolutely sure that Jesus' main concern was eschatology, the world to come. The latter do not hesitate to declare that "the upholders of the 'social gospel' as the primary meaning of Jesus' message have an unenviable burden of proof to overcome." Indeed, they even intimate that the social gossellers lack modern technical scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

Just when German scholarship was ready to acclaim its psychologically built Jesus as historically assured, other critics began to point to Jesus' teachings of the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven, and the assured results of liberal Germanic Jesuses vanished into thin air. Schweitzer laments, "we thought we could hold Him, that we could domicile Him in our age; but He is somehow foreign and strange, we could not keep Him." The gigantic quest of German critical research

<sup>1</sup> "Essentially failure." W. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> So Easton, B. S., *Christ in the Gospels*, pp. 161, 158. However, Dr. Easton is cited as an eschatologist; not as a pure naturalist. Cf. R. Bultman, "Jesus taught no ethics"; and M. Dibelius, "the gospel (of Jesus) contained no ethic." M. Dibelius, *Jesus in Contemporary German Theology*, *The Journal of Religion*, April, 1931.

ends in a question mark. Who is He? What is He like? And neither the Jesus of mere ethical fervour nor the Jesus obsessed by eschatology is a great enough figure to account for the Christian enterprise.

We may learn just a little from this negative study. The very fervour and persistence, the exhaustive intensity with which the minimistic critics have for a century and a half pursued their object, is itself a tribute to the hold which Jesus has on the human heart. The herculean character of these efforts is the mute protest from the subconscious hearts of these critics themselves against the pettiness of the frame into which they try to crowd Jesus. Even the record of this negative German "boring criticism" is a witness to a Jesus greater than it will admit.

Meanwhile the barrenness of the results, the fruitlessness of the search, indicate error at the foundation of the undertaking. The end hung at the beginning. We can never get an historic Jesus small enough to fit the frame of historicism because that small Jesus never lived. The Jesus of naturalism is an imaginary Jesus.

Then suppose we start over on a new track, with a different technique. Instead of assuming at the start that the ordinary methods of historical science will not work in the case of Jesus, let us try those methods for ourselves. Why decide at the beginning how Jesus must be? Why begin, like a mediævalist, with a deductive presupposition? Why insist on forcing history into preconceived moulds?<sup>1</sup> Why not let history speak for itself? Why not give the Jesus whom Christianity professes the same chance to attest Himself that you give any other historical figure? Why rule God out of history at the start? After all, history may be primarily His story. Dr. Alfred Plummer, in his *Commentary on Matthew*, p. xxxiii., writes: "To decide *a priori* that Deity cannot become incarnate, or that incarnate Deity must exhibit such and such characteristics, is neither true philosophy nor scientific criticism." Professor Paul Elmer More reasons that "this preconception is unjustifiable, that on the contrary, the supposition of a higher nature resident within our human nature is of itself no more irrational than that operation of mind in body which every act of existence forces us to accept."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. J. E. Kuizenga's polemic vs. "naturalistic usuals," in his inaugural address. *Princeton Seminary Review*, November, 1931, p. 7, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christ of the New Testament*, p. 248.

In the light of physics' new principle of indeterminacy it is no longer valid to stigmatise the supernatural as unscientific superstition. If both for the brain and for the atom there is nothing in the physical world (i.e. the world of pointer readings) to predetermine the decision, it seems preposterous to regard the Maker of both atom and brain as shut out of direct activity in this world by an exact mechanical determinism which science no longer teaches.

There are four ways by which any phenomenon may attest itself historically. If we seek to discover the truth of any fact or any person in the past, we must do so by one or more of these four ways. A person or an event is known by (1) effects; (2) monuments; (3) institutions; or (4) traditions, including chiefly documents. Now if you apply these four criteria of general historical phenomena to the Jesus Christ whom the Christianity of the centuries worships, He attests Himself by every one of them. On the other hand, if you apply these four criteria to the merely human Jesus of radical criticism, he falls before every test and vanishes into the melancholy blue of modern poetry.

The Divine-human Jesus of Christian faith is in the first place attested by the tremendous effects which He has produced in history. General history is inexplicable apart from historic Christianity; and historic Christianity is unaccountable apart from the Christ she has professed and worshipped. Historic Christianity requires the Divine Christ to account for its glorious onward march that by faith, love, martyrdom, conquered the persecuting Empire of Rome in less than three centuries. Dr. Gwatkin, an editor of the Cambridge mediæval history, defines Jesus' impress thus: "Somehow or other modern history radiates as visibly from Jesus of Nazareth as ancient history converges on Him. The systems of men have their day, but the majestic course of the ages gathers around that Son of Man who claimed to be the final truth of earth and heaven." Jean Paul Richter declared: "Christ, being the holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, has lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of the centuries out of its channel, and still governs the future." Napoleon was struck by the vast superiority of Jesus to himself or any other world conqueror. Jesus founded His empire on His death, He conquered men by love, not by iron—and yet millenniums after "the days of His flesh" millions would die for Him.

One must admit with Dr. L. M. Sweet that "the movement which culminated in Christianity is the most significant, as it is the most central historical movement of antiquity." Therefore, "the depreciation of Christianity is the degradation of history."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Abraham Kuiper, sometime Premier of Holland, has discerned that "the history of mankind is a coherent process with the Cross as its centre"; while to the same effect Dr. James Moffatt has written, "the crucifixion was not a passing event, but the hinge of history."<sup>2</sup> Even a Hindu professor of modern history in South India avers: "My study of modern history has shown me that there is a moral pivot in the world, and that more and more the best life of the East and West is revolving about that Pivot; that Pivot is Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> A group of modern scholars finds here a fresh approach to the Incarnation. "On any showing Christ is the central figure in history; and we approach Him through His place in history, and His power over men both in His own day and ever since"—to find Him, "the Lord of Life."<sup>4</sup> "For those who believe, as we all do at heart, that the world is rational, that real effects follow real causes and conversely that behind great movements lie great forces the fact must weigh enormously that wherever the Christian Church, or a section of it, or a single Christian has put upon Jesus Christ a higher emphasis—above all where everything has been centred in Jesus Christ there has been an increase of power for Church, or community, or man. Where new value has been found in Jesus Christ, the Church has risen in power, in energy, in appeal, in victory."<sup>5</sup>

Glance at the writings of the Church Fathers. Their exegesis is often strained and faulty, but it is strained by their effort to do justice to their inescapable conviction that the Most High became incarnate for us men and for our salvation. Through the centuries Christ has been giving men inner adequacy, peace, forgiveness, the brightness of the Father's face. Today in India, the most philosophical and spiritual nation of the East, the holy men are gathering about a round table to tell the outcome of their fervid seekings after God. One by one they witness; and one by one—Gandhi at their head—they testify, "We have

<sup>1</sup> Sweet, L. M., *The Verification of Christianity*, pp. 170, 171.

<sup>2</sup> Kuiper, *Calvinism*, p. 7; Moffatt, *The Day Before Yesterday*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Speer, R. E., *Some Living Issues*, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *The Lord of Life*, A Fresh Approach to the Incarnation. Preface. Macmillan Co.

<sup>5</sup> Glover, T. R., *The Jesus of History*, p. 3.

not found God." And then the lowly Christian arises to speak his joy that God has found him—that God has manifested Himself as Father in our Lord Jesus Christ—and that in Christ the vision of God as gracious Father abides. Unique spiritual effects require a unique spiritual cause. Professor Whitehead regards causal thinking as the most fundamental and distinctive element in the Western mind. The argument from effects in establishing historical facts, resting as it does on the causal judgment, has much of the quality of demonstration. By causal thinking, by the tremendous and absolutely unique impress of the Divine Christ upon men and history, we pronounce Him historically true.

Let us look next at the testimony of the monuments. Popular writers who have made a close study of the "holy lands," go so far as to affirm that the place references prove the Bible to be true. At least this is certain: the findings of archæology have trended in that direction.<sup>1</sup> But the Divine Lord has left His monuments in every century and in every clime. If we study the fine arts, we discover that Christ has been the inspiration and the theme of the most sublime in architecture, the most beautiful in painting, the most ennobling in sculpture, the highest in music, the finest in literature, the most just and the most humane in legislation, the loftiest in philosophy and ethics. And to the masters' Christ was not merely another genius—but their Lord and Redeemer. Shakespeare bids us *kneel* beneath

"Those blessed feet

Which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed  
For our advantage to the bitter cross."—*Henry V.*

Moreover, there is one monument that reaches back to Jesus Himself. The earliest records of the Jerusalem Church speak of their breaking bread. The Apostle Paul found this memorial in Corinth and wrote to correct certain errors that had crept into the Corinthian observance. Each of the first three Gospels ascribes the beginning of the Christian memorial feast to the Saviour. Now the lofty portrait of Jesus to which this memorial testifies is indicated by the name it bears. We call it not Jesus' supper, but the Lord's Supper. The monumental table extending already nineteen hundred years—and touching every

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay, Sir Wm., *Bearings of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*. H. & S.

land and nation—testifies to One who conceived Himself great enough to shed His blood for the remission of sins, and mighty enough to give His flesh for the life of the world.

We turn to the testimony of institutions. It is the fashion of present-day criticism to minimise the value of the New Testament testimony to Christ by saying that its books are the product of the early Christian Church, and speak the faith of that Church. Even so, this is admitting that there was an institution in the first century—the primitive Christian Church—which believed in the Deity of Christ. On hostile criticism's own testimony the New Testament is institutional evidence. And institutions are one way by which historic fact is validated. This first century institution—even naturalistic criticism being evidence—lived and wrote from the standpoint of faith in Christ. This institution took toward Him the full religious attitude—its earliest martyr committed his soul to Jesus in death—to Him its prayers were offered. R. Otto, one of these critics, writes, there is "no fact in history better attested than the rock-fast conviction" of the first Christian community in the resurrection of Jesus; while, from the testimony of Paul, even Bousset is certain that the Person of Jesus had for the faith of His first community no indefinite, but a perfectly determinate significance.<sup>1</sup> Emil Brunner declares that "no historical criticism can deny, with any hope of success, that the first church already revered Jesus as the risen Lord."<sup>2</sup> There is, then, a first century institution testifying to the historicity of that tremendous figure to Whom *as to God* the Church of every century has sung its hymns. On the other hand, there is no institution in the first century bearing witness to the puny figure which modernism paints. There are no certain records of Jewish Ebionites with their minimistic picture of the Messiah earlier than the second half of the second century<sup>3</sup>; and in their case "all agree that we are dealing not with communities but with individuals, sects,

<sup>1</sup> *Was Wissen Wir Von Jesus?* pp. 17-26. Condensed by Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, p. 256, note 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Theology of Crisis*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Machen, J. G., *The Virgin Birth*, pp. 15ff. Seeberg, R., *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, I, 88, holds that the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, after having been revised by a Jew (A.D. 70-130) was again interpolated by an Ebionite Jewish Christian in view of the destruction of Jerusalem. On this complicated question our main purpose necessitates only the remark that the functions ascribed to the Messiah in the passages in question better befit the Christ of the New Testament than the Jesus of naturalism. Levi 16: 3, 18; 18, especially 10-12; Judah 24, Charles, R. H., *Pseudepigrapha of Old Testament*, pp. 313-315, 323.

Nor can "historicism" find a rest for the sole of her foot in the stupendous angel of the traditional *Book of Elkesai*.



or schools of thought."<sup>1</sup> Institutional testimony sustains the historicity of Christ, the Divine Head of His Body, the Church.

But perhaps the fullest evidence for the historicity of our Lord Jesus Christ—as for most historical events—is the evidence of tradition. The Christian traditions are carefully preserved in a number of historical documents. A few years ago a doctor in my congregation became disturbed for fear there was no evidence for Christianity in secular history. Needless to say, Christianity would not be referred to by Roman writers until it attracted their attention in Rome, or in the administration of the provinces. As a matter of fact, three Roman writers refer to Christ in the first hundred years of Christianity's life—Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny the younger. These men tell us of a dissension among the Jews in Rome concerning Chrestus (an evident Roman misunderstanding for Christus) about the year 50; of Christians persecuted under Nero; that Christ, from Whom their name was taken, had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator, Pontius Pilate; that the Christians in Bithynia met regularly and sang a hymn antiphonally to Christ as to God. Which Jesus is accredited by the secular historians—the purely human Jesus of historicism, or the Divine Lord of the Church? If we had only these secular testimonies, we would not even have the human name, Jesus; but we would have attested one who was crucified as Christ (i.e. the Jewish Messiah) and who was worshipped as God. How, then, can Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick affirm that, whatever question there may be about the divinity of Christ, there is none about his humanity, and therefore one should assert that he was primarily man and only God in what sense he can be, being assuredly man.<sup>2</sup> This means to Dr. Fosdick that nobody should go to Jesus, "to his manger and his cross, to find the omnipotence that swings Orion and the Pleiades." On the contrary, if we are to be governed by the weight of evidence, we shall rather start with the primary dictum that Christ is God and man so far as he may be, being known to secular history primarily as God.

References to Jesus in the common version of Josephus have been suspected of being Christian interpolations; and yet

<sup>1</sup> Kidd, B. J., *A History of the Church*, Vol. I, p. 91, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> Fosdick, H. E., *The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 253, 258, 269. One regrets that the same author has circulated a sermon on *The Peril of Worshipping Jesus*, and that an author, closer home, has classified that worship which the most of his followers offer to Jesus as "anthromorphic idolatry" (sic), *The New Science and the Old Faith*, p. 129.

Rabbi Klausner accepts part of the first and the entire second reference as authentic. Conversely, antagonistic references in the Old Russian version are suspected of being Jewish interpolations; but Dr. B. S. Easton finds a "nub" of truth in these.<sup>1</sup> Now an interesting phenomenon is to be noted here. There are just two elements common to the references in the Greek Josephus which the Jewish scholar accepts as genuine and to the references in the Slavonic Josephus which the Christian scholar accepts. If we allow this common residuum to stand as Josephus' authentic testimony, we have another non-Christian witness near the end of the first century testifying (1) that Jesus was a wonder-worker; (2) that he professed Messiahship ("was called Christ," was "covetous of kingship"). Thus even the hostile Josephus adds his witness that Jesus was the Christ of supernatural power; and his writings cannot be adduced as documentary testimony to a purely natural Jesus.

In the New Testament we have the earliest Christian documents concerning our Lord—a literature including letters, records and a "prophecy." It used to be the custom in critical circles to maintain that the first three Gospels presented a view of Jesus as primarily a man. At the present time criticism is agreed that every one of the books in the New Testament is written from the standpoint of faith in Christ. Schweitzer crisply expresses this general consensus when he states that German criticism was unable to get rid of the Deity of Christ even in Mark's (the briefest) Gospel, and therefore it rejected the historicity thereof. Bousset says this, "the oldest Gospel," is written from the standpoint of faith; that for Mark, Jesus is the miraculous, eternal Son of God, Whose glory shone into the world.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately (or rather Providentially) the books of the New Testament which are the most indisputable are the very ones which paint the glory of Christ in the most unmistakable terms—the major epistles of Paul. Paul, an educated Pharisee, was in contact with the Christian movement from its inception—first as persecutor, then as supporter. He was converted within five years of Christ's crucifixion, and was an active preacher of the faith thereafter. Paul's unquestioned writings begin within

<sup>1</sup> Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 55-60. Commenting on *Antiquities*, XVIII, iii.-3; XX, ix.-1. Easton, B. S., *Christ in the Gospels*, pp. 168, 169. Commenting on Old Russian Josephus.

<sup>2</sup> *Was Wissen Wir Von Jesus?* p. 54 seq., cited, *The Lord of Glory*, p. 158.

twenty years of the close of our Lord's ministry, and preserve statements of faith even ante-dating the Apostle's own conversion (e.g. 1 Cor. xv. 3ff). These epistles are written to Christian Churches, testifying alike to the faith of the writer and of the receivers. Galatians, perhaps the earliest of them, tells us that the pillars of the Jerusalem Church (Peter, James and John) had given Paul the right hand of fellowship in testimony that his gospel was their gospel. Now in these epistles Jesus is primarily described as *the Lord*; a term which Judaism had trained Paul to apply only to the Supreme Being. In fact, Paul frequently takes Old Testament texts which refer to Jehovah and applies them to Jesus—thus by calling Jesus Lord, Paul is giving Him the divine name (2 Thess. i. 9; 1 Cor. i. 31, x. 9-26; 2 Cor. iii. 16, x. 17; Romans x. 13; Eph. vi. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 19; iv. 14. Isaiah xlv. 23 is cited with reference to God (the Father) in Rom. xiv. 11, and with reference to Jesus in Phil. ii. 10).

Alongside of Paul's epistles we have the Synoptic Gospels, which criticism now acknowledges to have been written from a like lofty conception of Christ. These Gospels simply could not have been fabricated to support Paul's theology just because their portrait of Jesus is intrinsically too lofty for any man to have made up. It would have taken an infinitely greater dramatist than Shakespeare to have imagined the tremendous yet realistic Figure of the Gospels. It would have taken a Divine Jesus to have invented the Gospels. But that is only another way of saying that the Jesus Whom the Gospels portray is necessary to account for the Gospel. This picture could not have been concocted—therefore it must have lived. As a matter of fact, Luke expressly asserts that he has had access to abundant testimony from primitive documents and eyewitnesses to the events of which he speaks; and that he has carefully sifted this testimony so as to present to Theophilus an account that is historically assured (Luke i. 1-4). The credit of Luke as an accurate historian has been steadily rising as again and again archæology has substantiated his many historical allusions—until today Sir William Ramsay describes Luke as the greatest historian of all time. But, if Luke is accurate, so must be Matthew and Mark, for the fundamental outline and most of the specific incidents in the first two Gospels are reproduced in Luke. The Synoptists add their testimony to Paul. They

present Jesus as the superhuman, supermundane Son of Man, spoken of in Daniel vii. 13-14 and in the Parables of Enoch—One Who, pre-existing under the pinions of the Lord of Spirits, came to earth on a mission of mercy, and will one day come back in the clouds of divine glory (Mark xiii. 26 ; xiv. 62). They present Jesus as twice acknowledged from heaven as God's Beloved Son ; as the only Son, fundamentally *other* than the servants or prophets whom the Father had formerly sent into the vineyard (Mark xii). The Evangelists apply to the coming of Jesus the great Old Testament passages which speak of the coming of the Lord Jehovah (Mark i. 2-3 ; Mal. iii. 1 ; Isa. xl. 3), and represent Jesus as asserting that the Christ is David's Lord, Who sits on the right hand of Jehovah until His enemies be made the footstool of His feet (Mark xii. 36 ; Ps. cx ; Mark xiv. 62).

Nor can any higher criticism successfully produce more primitive documents representing a Jesus essentially different from the Synoptic Gospels' picture. Most of the passages already adduced, with their lofty Christology, belong to the hypothecated Primitive Narrative (Ur-Mark). One of the passages which Professor P. W. Schmiedel offers as "the foundation pillars for a truly scientific life of Jesus" depicts Him as the Son of super-angelic dignity (Mark xiii. 32). If resort be had to *Formgeschichte*, objection may very properly be filed against the subjectivity which has so far characterised this criticism. However, we have no hesitancy in affirming that, whenever a reasonable number of Gospel "units" are examined under the dry light of genuine objectivity, they yield a Divine Christ. For example, Dibelius finds seven "models" of the early catechetical instruction preserved in a relatively pure state. The first three of these "paradigms" are Mark ii. 1-12, Mark ii. 18-22, Mark ii. 23-28. In the first, Jesus, implying that in the heavenly world He exercises the loftiest functions, asserts that even on earth the Son of Man hath authority to forgive sins. In the second, He presents Himself as the Bridegroom, thus assuming that relationship to God's people which Jehovah holds in the Old Testament. In the third, He asserts sovereignty over the religious observances of Israel—"the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

The first "form" to be developed was mission preaching (Predigt). Among the elements in the first *kerygma* the passion-and-resurrection story is accepted as a "unit" of peculiar

primitiveness, since this is a constant element in the "preachments" of Acts and in the "word" which Paul received and transmitted to his converts (1 Cor. xv. 3-7). Dr. Easton has presented an exhaustive study of Jesus' self-testimony in this fundamental tradition. In this he conclusively demonstrates (1) that Jesus was crucified for claiming Messiahship; (2) that, in view of His imminent death, celestial Messiahship was the only sense in which Jesus could possibly have made that affirmation (Mark xiv. 62-63).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, if refuge be taken in *the Sayings (Q.)* we have a document which Streeter dates twenty years prior to Mark, and which Salmon and Ramsay carry back to the very days of Jesus' ministry. In these primitive discourses occurs the great passage in which Jesus asserts that even while on earth He, the Son, enjoyed a continuous intercommunion with the Father. Indeed, the Son holds to the Father such a uniquely reciprocal relationship of interpenetrating knowledge and absolute sovereignty that the revelation of each by the other constitutes in fact God's saving self-revelation to human souls (Matt. xi. 25-30; Luke x. 21-22).<sup>2</sup> According to these most primitive traditions Jesus taught His own Deity, and His life is that of one to be trusted.

The other documents of the beginning of the Christian movement plainly corroborate the lofty portraiture of our Lord preserved by the primary witnesses—Paul and the Synoptists. Whether we accept the limits of the New Testament or the limit of the first hundred years of the Christian movement, the consentient testimony of the documents is the same. James (ii. 1), perhaps the earliest Christian document, calls Jesus "our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory." Paul (1 Cor. ii. 8) calls Him "the Lord of Glory." Jude (4) calls Him "our only absolute Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Peter (Acts x. 36; cf. 1 Peter ii. 3, Ps. xxxiv. 8, 1 Peter i. 2) calls Him "Lord of all," and (2 Peter i. 11; ii. 20; iii. 18) "our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." Barnabas, A.D. 100 (v. 5-6), calls Him "the Lord of all the world"—and that even prior to the creation of man. 1 Clement, A.D. 97 (xvi.), calls Him "our Lord Jesus Christ, the sceptre of the majesty of God." Polycarp, A.D. 115 (Phil. ii.),

<sup>1</sup> Easton, B. S., *Christ in the Gospels*, pp. 164-172. *The Gospel before the Gospels*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> More, P. E., *The Christ of the New Testament*, p. 343. Since this "jubilation" passage, "in substance at least, is genuine, . . . we must acknowledge that Jesus arrogated to Himself something more than belongs to humanity." Cf. Statement by Walter Pater, p. 239.

describes Him as "our Lord Jesus Christ," to Whom God gave glory and a throne at His own right hand. Revelation (xvii. 14 and xix. 16) describes Jesus as "Lord of Lords." According to John (xx. 28, *cf.* i. 1, i. 18 Aleph B C text), Thomas addressed Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Paul (Titus ii. 13) asserts that He is "our great God and Saviour," yea (Romans ix. 5) "God over all."<sup>1</sup> 1 John (v. 20) declares Him "the true God and life eternal." Hebrews (i. 8) describes Him as the eternal God. 2 Peter (i. 1) asserts that He is "our God and Saviour." Ignatius, A.D. 110-115 (Eph., Smyr., Rom., etc.), continually speaks of "our God, Jesus Christ." *The Didache*, Streeter, A.D. 90-100 (vii. 1-3), follows Matthew (xxviii. 18-20) in describing Jesus as the sharer in the Name of Father, *and of the Son*, and of the Holy Spirit. The ordinance connected with this text suggests that host of "living epistles" who were baptised into the name of the Lord (*Didache* ix; Acts ii. 38, x. 48, xix. 5; Romans vi. 3). These early Christians in this initiatory act professed to stand in full religious relationship to Jesus; therefore they might almost be described as a mighty body of documentary witnesses to the Deity of One Whose name was written by baptism on their foreheads.

Every early document that we possess witnesses to a Divine Christ. Therefore, those who profess that the merely human figure is the historic Jesus have not a single first century document on which to rest their claim. Now the primary dictum of all historical methodology is "No documents, no history." Applying this universally accredited canon, we may properly say to the naturalistic critic—Sir, you have no documents, therefore you have no history. That philanthropic portrait of Jesus which you have so assiduously drawn may be very interesting; if it is maintaining lofty ideals in your lives, it may even be useful; indeed, it may meet the test of value-judgments; but it certainly cannot be regarded as historically accredited. On the other hand, the tremendous Christ of the New Testament and of the Church's faith is attested by every method by which any historical fact may be ascertained—the witness of the effects He has wrought, the monuments He has left, the institution He founded (the Christian Church), and the documents of the Christian beginnings He has inspired. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord

<sup>1</sup> So on the latter even McGiffert, *The God of the Early Christians*, p. 27. *Cf.* 2 Thess. i. 12; Acts xx. 28, Aleph B. text.

of Glory, is the historic Jesus. He is the Eternal Son of God, to Whom men may safely commit their souls for time and for eternity.

At the present moment there is an interesting endeavour to found faith on the super-historical. A group of brilliant German scholars start with naturalistic historicism. They deny that the Christian Christology can enter the category of universal history, since it does not permit of human comparison or classification. Then, in deference to the claims of faith, they reverse themselves and affirm this Christology on the ground of "super-history" or "Spirit-history."

This process undoubtedly is intellectually delectable. One gives his allegiance to the naturalism of modern knowledge in one breath; and in the next to the supernaturalism of Christian faith. One is afforded an interesting epistemological movement from a primary affirmative, by way of a logical negative to a paradoxical kind of synthesis.

But when the process is taken out of the sphere of the subjective ego the charm vanishes. In the field of factual phenomena the plan lacks causal coherence which is essential to the etymological meaning of history, as *web, tissue*. As an apologetical method it will in the end prove suicidal. What lawyer setting out to prove the innocence of a client would begin by discrediting both the character and the fact witnesses for the defence, in order that thereafter counsel might appeal to the jury to clear the accused on the basis of attorney's "super-evidential" confidence in defendant's innocence? This method may seem to honour God by insisting on the need for the present work of the Holy Spirit to give Christian faith in spite of the lack of historical evidence. But in denying His footprints on the pages of time; in declaring that God has left Himself without historical witness to the glory of His Christ; in assuming that God expects an affirmation without evidence it is really reflecting discredit upon God's Providential provisions for ascertaining the truth of His grace. The God of history is the God of grace. God is honoured by using the historical testimony He has provided—including the evidential presuppositions offered by Hebraic Theism—with humble dependence upon and prayer for the Holy Spirit to effectuate this testimony to inquiring minds. The real Reformed doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* is that the subjective renewal of the soul by the Holy Spirit is

absolutely necessary before a proper historical argumentation can produce "firm faith." The presentation of valid grounds and the testimony of the Holy Spirit are co-factors in the production of the supreme effect.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warfield, B. B., *Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, *Princeton Theological Review*, 1909, pp. 277-295.