

NEW TESTAMENT.

In *Der vorchristliche Jesus, nebst weiteren Vorstudien zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums* (A. Töpelmann, Giessen, 1906) we have a remarkable work which comes from America by way of Germany; and its author, Professor W. B. Smith, of the Tulane University, could scarcely have lighted on a more competent translator than Pastor Lehmpfuhl when deciding to address himself to German readers. He will drive it home to them that attempts to derive Christianity from a mere man are doomed to failure; they are also given to understand that there can be no question of any historical personage as its founder. Discoursing of the combination 'Jesus Christ' he urges that neither title is to be explained of a human being of this earth, but that in their primary significance they must alike be interpreted of a deity—the former being more particularly Jewish, the latter half-foreign and suggesting the Diaspora. In his opening essay—we learn, by the way, that what he now publishes is but a first instalment, he is far more concerned to stimulate to reflexion than to score an easy victory—he enquires into the precise import of the phrase τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ; it will not do, we are told, to explain it of events in the life of Jesus; it really points to a 'Jesuslehre' met with in various stages of developement, to a cult which obtained extensively amongst Jews, more particularly Hellenists, long before the Christian era. The author of Acts may labour to establish it that Jerusalem was the one centre from which a new religion was disseminated, but it is all in vain; the Gospels contradict him, he himself relates much which runs counter to his own theory; the 'we-sections' (apparently the diary of wandering preachers with connexions far and wide), together with other notices and allusions, are conclusive for a propaganda which had long been going on at many centres. That the question turns on pre-Christian theological conceptions is plain from the ancient Naasene hymn; it is highly significant that the name of Jesus is invested from the very first with all the magic power of the ineffable tetragram. What does the designation 'Jesus the Nazarene' really mean?—here, again, the thought can only be of deity, for (as is argued at greater length in the second essay) the word Nazarene has nothing whatever to do with the 'geographical fiction' Nazareth; it has its source in a Semitic root N-Ş-R; Jesus—Protector, Guardian, Saviour—is none other than the Eternal; conceivably the full original designation ὁ Ναζωραῖος really stands for N-Ş-R-J-H, 'Hüter Jahves oder Jahve der Hüter.' In the third Essay the meaning of the preaching 'God raised up Jesus' is discussed; the word ἀνάστασις, we are told, must be explained

of appointment to an office; only by the subsequent addition of *ἐκ νεκρῶν* could the raising up be understood of resurrection. There are two other essays: in one of them (*Der Säemann sät den Logos*) the Parable of the Sower is held to be a modification or adaptation of Gnostic theories of the Creation; in the other (*Saeculi Silentium*) the Pauline Epistles are treated of—'up to A. D. 160 no one had any knowledge of the Epistle to the Romans'. But here I am not quoting from Professor Smith's trenchant pages; his book, eminently readable and displaying an abundance of research, will attract attention from the fact of its appearance under the aegis of Professor Schmiedel, who contributes a preface from which the borrowed words are taken. Dr Schmiedel will have the book taken seriously. He bids students recognize in one who writes to him, 'my vocation is mathematics, my avocation theology,' a man not easily refuted, a mathematician equipped with theological learning by no means at the command of every theologian, and scholarly in his methods. As I find him more than hinting that sooner or later he will take the field and join issue with Professor Smith himself, I refrain from attempts to criticize a work the contents of which I have sketched in rough outline. Dr Schmiedel's review should be interesting reading; has he not been saying recently: 'Meinem innersten religiösen Besitz würde kein Schaden geschehen, wenn ich mich heute überzeugen müsste, dass Jesus gar nicht gelebt habe'? To which, however, he was quick to add: 'Aber als Geschichtsforscher kann ich nur sagen, dass dazu keine Aussicht ist.'

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The Fourth Gospel, Its Purpose and Theology, by ERNEST F. SCOTT (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1906), is a work that should be widely read, even by those who dissent from its conclusions, for it is probably the ablest summary of results of advanced criticism on the Fourth Gospel that has appeared in the English language.

Mr Scott assigns the date of the Gospel 'with a fair degree of certainty' to the first or second decade of the second century. The original Christian message had by that time unfolded itself into a larger significance. The great mind of Paul had worked upon it. There was a transition not only to a new age but to a new culture. There was a danger of the Gospel evaporating as a philosophy, or petrifying as a tradition.

The author of the Fourth Gospel presents the Sonship of Christ under two aspects which are radically distinct, although to appearance they are brought into harmony. There is, first, the metaphysical