

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER

VOL. XXXI (No. 7)

JULY, 1917

NO. 734

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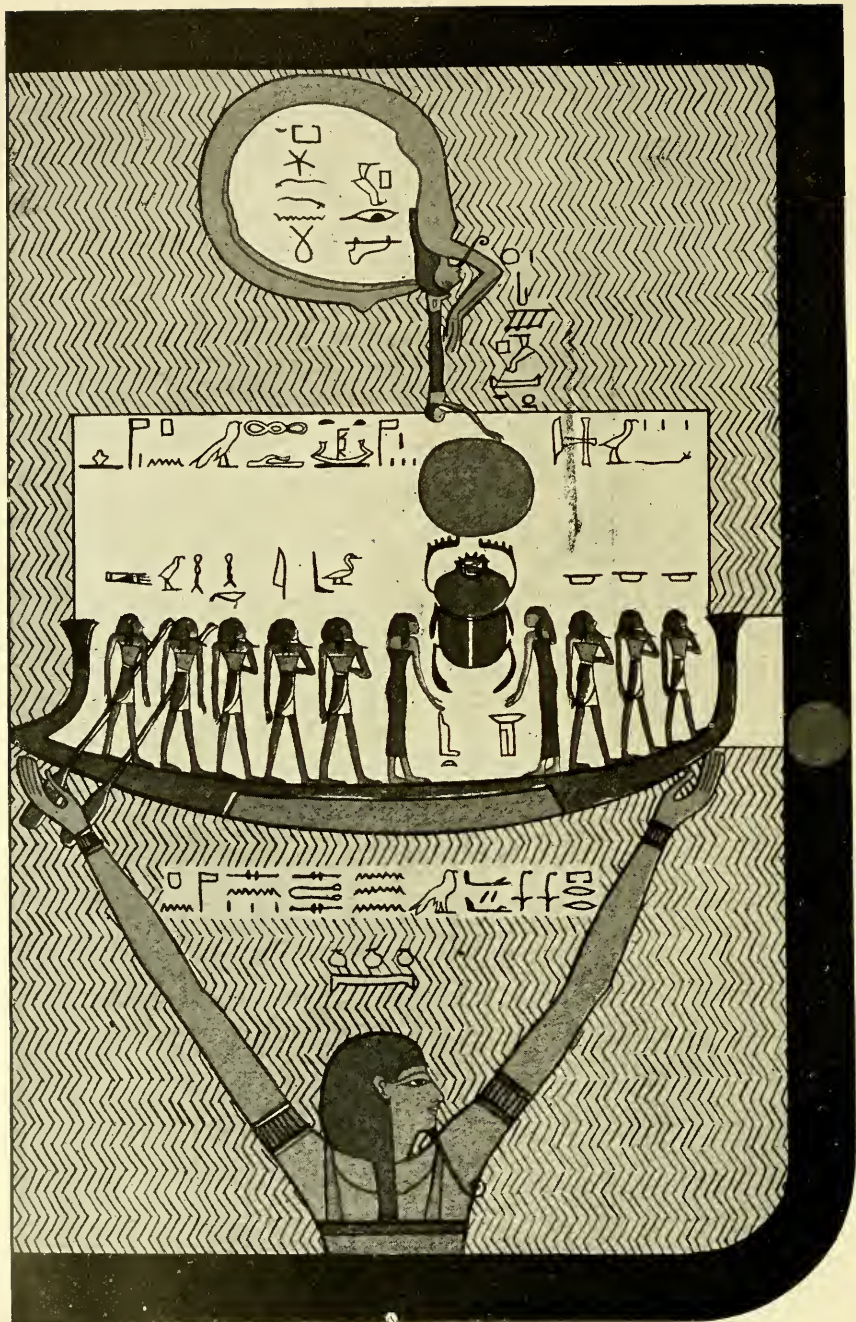
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THE EGYPTIAN CONCEPTION OF CREATION.
From Budge's *Gods of the Egyptians*, Vol. I.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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REGARDING CHRISTIAN ORIGINS.

BY FRANK R. WHITZEL.

OF late years there have been advanced to account for the origin of Christianity certain novel theories that either dispense wholly with a historical Jesus or reduce him to an insignificance which would render his real existence superfluous. Dr. A. Drews and Mr. J. M. Robertson regard Christianity as the development of a myth based upon a preexisting secret worship of a sun-god named Jesus or Joshua who annually died and came to life with the course of the seasons. Though the Jewish hierarchy from the High Priest down exemplified this worship in a secret ritual, the cult picked up from pagan sources, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, even Brahman and Buddhist, a heterogeneous collection of myths which it combined with the ancient though unknown Hebrew legend into the conglomerate which became historic Christianity. Prof. W. B. Smith is in fairly close agreement with these ideas but is a trifle more conservative in that he holds to the essentially Jewish origin of the cult. The Gospels are but the written text of the drama annually acted by the initiated priests at Jerusalem. Prof. Van Manen allows a shadowy existence to a real Jesus, but thinks Christianity arose from among a society of liberal Jews and their Gentile proselytes which in the early years of the second century, in order to break away from orthodox Judaism, put itself under the protection of the name of an earlier missionary, Paul, who had himself been led to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. This school had come by that time to look upon Jesus as the divine Son of God rather than a mere Messiah, and its adherents composed epistles, histories and apocalypses in the name of Paul, Luke, Matthew, or other worthies, in which they expounded their beliefs and controverted their opponents.

Van Manen's English interpreter, Thomas Whittaker, goes further and denies flatly the existence of an historical Jesus. Accepting the Christ-myth theory in great part, he insists Christianity did not originate until after the taking of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Before that time it was represented by a body of "Messianic Jews" who merely hoped for the coming of the Christ. Paul was one of their preachers. After the fall of the Jewish capital, a rumor spread among this sect that the Messiah had already come and had been put to death by a Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, whose administration was remembered as a harsh one. From this hint all had developed, the identification of the mythical Jesus with the mysterious sun-god, the betrayal, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the whole mystery drama as set forth in the Gospels. A liberalizing tendency eventually made its appearance from the representatives of which emanated writings of 125 to 150 A. D. under Paul's name urging doctrines to which the real Paul was a stranger.

Dr. P. Jensen writes a laborious tome to prove that Jesus is but the legendary Babylonian hero, Gilgamesh, in a Jewish disguise; and he draws up a long list of alleged similarities which he believes fully prove his thesis. Finally, an almost unnoticed theory is advanced by a Mr. George Solomon who thinks Jesus was born in the pages of Josephus and is the composite of an unnamed Samaritan zealot who was slain by the soldiers of Pontius Pilate, of Jesus son of Sapphias, a turbulent brigand who gave much trouble when Josephus was governor of Galilee, and of Jesus son of Ananus, a harmless monomaniac who went about predicting woe to Jerusalem and who was killed at the siege by a stone missile just as he added to his "ditty" a prophecy of his own destruction.

Dr. Jensen's theory, despite his undoubted learning, has never been seriously considered. The resemblances relied upon are too far fetched and the differences too fundamental to admit of accepting so thoroughgoing a transference of the Babylonian legend into Hebrew lore. Moreover Dr. Jensen applies his theory to the Old as well as the New Testament; and he is asking too much of our credulity when he expects us to believe that almost all the incidents related in the Bible are but variations of the Gilgamesh story. Even more improbable is Mr. Solomon's suggestion. That the Jesus of the New Testament could be compounded of three characters of Josephus, none of whom bear the faintest resemblance to him and all of whom show the strongest contrasts, is beyond any reasonable probability. As are so many other radical hypotheses, this of Mr. Solomon's is like a large sack containing but a single pebble, weighty

at one point but empty at all others. It leaves 99 per cent of the facts unexplained, and indeed it explains very imperfectly the remainder.

The Christ-myth theory has more to recommend it, and its proponents advance two arguments of undoubted merit which will be considered further on. Yet the theory has not gained general credence because of certain obvious weaknesses. Its advocates must perforce deny all the direct adverse evidence, internal and external; and this they do in part by asserting without sound critical justification that opposing texts are spurious, in part by drawing unwarranted conclusions from obscure or ambiguous passages, and in general by refusing to believe the contrary evidence. Their conclusions are frequently mere expressions of opinion masquerading as proven facts, and much too often they defend their opinions by casting reflections upon the intelligence of those who differ from them. But the chief objection lies in the improbability and inadequacy of the substitute they offer in place of the historic tradition. For a plain straightforward recital, in which are imbedded many narratives not without inconsistencies and which is full of course of the miracle stories inevitable in that superstitious age, they propose an inherently improbable tale far less fitted to explain the known facts and engendering many more problems than it solves. If we are solemnly told that the Jewish hierarchy, ready to perish for its single-hearted devotion to Jehovah, was secretly performing an annual ceremony in commemoration of an ever-dying ever-reviving sun-god Joshua, if we are required to believe that a church body made up of orthodox Jews, all so fanatically monotheistic that they characterized pagan gods as demons and died rather than do them honor, could yet select bits of legends pertaining to these same demons and construct therefrom a coherent story about a personage it is yet insisted had lived and died as a man, if we are called upon to assent to such improbabilities we should at least be given some direct evidence of their truth, some facts of unquestioned historical basis upon which to hang the hinges of the theory. But nothing of the kind is offered us. No channels of possible communication with pagan sources are exposed to our view, no relation between the flimsy coincidences they adduce is demonstrated, no adaptability in national life and thought for the borrowed rites is plausibly argued for our persuasion. We have only opinion and speculation. Nay, we are shortly told that such evidence does not exist, but that intelligent people have no difficulty in inferring these conclusions from certain equivocal or marginal readings in scripture

and certain obscurities in profane authors, which sometimes turn out to be mere errors. And at the same time the theory contradicts the facts of history so far as they are known, and violates the ethical spirit of the age. Who doubts the militant monotheism of the Jews, or can imagine the rise in Judea of a Christianity as a "protest against polytheism"? And if it were such a protest, how could it be wholly made up of fragments of polytheism? And if it were a composite of polytheistic fragments, how could its adherents entertain such a virulent hatred of all things polytheistic? Among the Jews the literary tendency of the period was apocalyptic, not mythical. Then convenient "redactors" who are responsible for the written documents of Christianity must be understood to have taken such liberties with their material that, however these theorists regard them, ordinary men are compelled to charge them with dishonesty. Yet so clumsy were they, or so intent on revealing the secret they were trying to conceal, or on concealing what they were trying to reveal, that in concocting a new document with the older document open before them they could not avoid perpetrating the most glaring inconsistencies.

What a tissue of contradictions this! But the end is not yet. The theorists seem quite oblivious to the difficulties which arise if their theories be accepted. The Jesus of Christianity, if he is not a historical personage, is a product of fancy and was from the first conceived of as a divine being. This the theorists stoutly aver. Yet he is shown as thirsting and hungering, as subject to weariness and pain, as lacking at times in power and as disclaiming the epithet "good." He makes false prophecies, reproves his relatives,—how can a god created in the fancy of his worshippers have brothers and sisters?—pays tribute to rulers, shrinks from his approaching fate and utters a final cry of accusing despair upon the cross. All other critics think they detect in the Gospels limitations put upon their authors by the memory of an actual Jesus, limitations that prevented the free idealization which is found in later ages and which would certainly have been exhibited from the beginning had there been no historical kernel to the story. Only Robertson and his confreres can discern no such restraining influence. Their theory offers no reasonable explanation of the purely human element in the Gospels nor of those passages incompatible with the conception of Jesus as an ever-existent God.

Van Manen and Whittaker accept the Drews-Robertson hypothesis, but devote their attention rather to Acts and Paul's epistles than to the Gospels. They too wave to one side the opposing evi-

dence and resort to the "interpretation" device of getting rid of inconvenient passages; and they translate the writers bodily into the second quarter of the second century. Their methods of proving the late date of authorship are worthy of notice. A prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem is in itself conclusive evidence of its composition after that event. They forget that it is linked in every instance with a prophecy of the end of the world and the second coming of Christ; therefore those events must also have befallen. Paul's remark that Jerusalem is in bondage while the Jerusalem above is free, his words having very evidently a spiritual significance, they think also presupposes the fall of the city. Whereas the fact that Paul nowhere hints of such a catastrophe but everywhere assumes that Jerusalem is then standing as the center of the living Mosaic law, the likelihood that such a man would have referred unmistakably to the siege as a crowning argument had it taken place, and the practical certainty that a writer of the second century could not have refrained from adducing it to whelm his adversaries, all these considerations have no weight with them. They assume that no documents could have been written at an earlier time than immediately before they are mentioned by some other writer, and that the works of the earliest writer who did mention them have been preserved to us. By this baseless assumption, by free use of conjecture as to what a conjectural school of thought could or could not have said, and at bay by fiercely defying the positive evidence of earlier quotation, Van Manen and his disciples place the composition of Paul's epistles and canonical Acts subsequent to 125 A. D.

As already stated, these theorists distinguish Paul, an itinerant preacher representing a supposed association of Messianic Jews of the first century, to whose existence there is not a whisper of direct testimony, from Paulinism, a liberalizing movement arising within new-born Christianity in the last two decades of the century. Paulinism, they claim, seized upon this long dead Paul and elevated him to be its apostle. But about 125 A. D. there grew up inside the church a harmonizing school which put forth the epistles now ascribed to Paul and which finally succeeded in combining Paulinism and Judaic Christianity into the world-conquering Catholicism. This theory requires us to regard the documents of the New Testament as without exception pseudoepigraphic, and the most that it grants is that older fragments, such as the we-document of Acts, were incorporated into the new treatises after having been freely recast by the unknown editors. Hence it is incumbent on the

theorists to point out conclusive internal evidence of late authorship, of juncture and of polemical teaching. A glance at the pages of Whittaker's *Origins of Christianity* will show how he and Van Manen set about the task. A certain passage "probably" meant thus and so, such a "conjecture" is permissible, this "hints" at that or "suggests" the other thing. These are not cautious expressions of conservative criticism, far from it. They are put forward as offering indisputable proof of radical, nay even startling hypotheses. Speculation and surmise abound, and the guess of the present page becomes the proved fact on the next.

No one denies that many of the documents of the New Testament have passed through the hands of one or more redactors, but the redactors no less than the original author must have been governed by certain principles, or else we might as well give up all study of the books and dismiss them as mere fiction unworthy of notice. He must have intended to tell the truth. He must have respected the document before him and have been unwilling to change it except to make it conform to what he felt assured, either from texts or from oral tradition, was a superior version. While he might, without "agen-bite of in-wit," put out his own production as the work of another of greater authority, he could not narrate incidents he knew never happened nor, regarding spiritual revelations, make claims he knew to be false. But these theorists assume that the redactor will use any method or make or suppress any statement with utter disregard of truth simply to further a "tendency" or "purpose" in his own mind. Nor have they any system of dissecting the work of the redactor. What fits their theory stands. What opposes is "imperfect redaction," has "the appearance of an interpolation." The author "consciously manipulates his data" in a given direction, he "now freely recasts the materials in his own manner, now holds himself bound by the words of his document." Such a view would not only make of the redactor-author a fundamentally dishonest writer but it would permit a present-day critic to sustain any theory he might fancy. What cannot be proven if we may accept or reject whatever we like and "manipulate our data" to suit our theory?

And what wonderful things the theorists are able to find! From the most trivial expressions of no apparent ulterior significance, Whittaker can draw inferences of remarkable import and discover purposes and antecedents heretofore hidden from the keenest critical study. He sees evidence of two distinct documents in the use of "Jesus Christ" and "Christ Jesus"; discerns two incom-

pletely fused conceptions in "preach Jesus" and preach that Jesus "is the Son of God"; begets a numerous community at Jerusalem called "sons of Jesus" out of a single individual of Paphos named Bar-Jesus; detects Gnosticism in the opposition of God to Satan and similar expressions; finds a contradiction in the eucharist as commemorating the death of the Lord and as partaking of his body and blood, and in many other double expressions of one idea; and seemingly looks upon the use of "the Jews" as evidence that the user could not be a Jew himself, thus excluding even Josephus from that nationality. His discussion contains most of the fallacies known to false argumentation, such as suppressions, assumptions, conjectures, false inferences, perversions, special pleadings, and in more than one instance matter that falls little short of downright falsification. For example, he argues that there are Gnostic elements in the Pauline writings, a contention which few deny. Then he avers that this fact is fatal to their authenticity, as Christian Gnosticism cannot be carried back to Paul's lifetime. It is hard to see in this aught save deliberate deception, as it is evident he hopes his reader will overlook the very real difference between Gnosticism and Christian Gnosticism.

There seems to be no question that the school of thought called Gnosticism did really in essence precede Christianity. But during its early stages it had few of the characteristics which made of it in the second century a dangerous heresy in the eyes of the church. The indications of it in Paul's writings are merely incidental, such as could hardly be avoided by a religious writer of his epoch. He uses many of the expressions which later became catchwords of the Gnostics, such as wisdom, spirit, pleroma etc., but he not only does not discuss, he does not even mention the disputes so hotly contested between Gnostics and orthodox Christians in the second century. Both parties appealed to Paul's letters, thus evidencing their priority and at the same time proving that their composition had no reference whatever to the Gnostic controversies. On the contrary the Pauline letters are spirited polemics of the Judaizing question, which was a living question only until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. A forger could have had no object in putting forth epistles save to support his own contention regarding an existent dispute. How absurd to imagine a second-century writer forging a document to establish his own position, putting it in Paul's mouth to give it authority, and yet making no mention whatever of the living controversy while taking vehement part in a controversy long since settled and forgotten!

There are certain things that no man of common sense writing after 125 A. D. could possibly do, let alone a man of the ability possessed by the author of the Pauline epistles. He would not fight forgotten battles or ignore present ones. He would not advertise apostolic quarrels such as those of Paul with Peter and with Barnabas. He would not, writing two epistles, permit patent inconsistencies to stand, such as the discrepant mention of the sinner in 1 and 2 Corinthians, and the description in the latter of an earlier letter which does not fit the first epistle as we have it. Of the same kind is the account of the apostolic council given in Acts and in Galatians. A forger would certainly make the later document agree with the earlier. He would not tolerate contradictions within the same epistle, as that women should and should not speak in the church and that men are and are not saved by the law. These are easily explainable on the theory of a writer viewing the same thing under two aspects,—a woman would better be silent, at least until she had something to say; a man born under the law might be saved through its observance, though it was not a real essential. Such a forger could not put in the apostle's mouth false prophecies of the impending end of the world, of his own safety from the Jews, and so on, nor could he permit the great miracle worker to confess his inability to restore to health his dearly beloved disciples, Trophimus and Epaphroditus. Above all he could not, would not dare, censure violently and unjustly existing communities. The churches of Galatia and Corinth were flourishing bodies from long before until long after the time the epistles are supposed by Van Manen's school to have been written. Imagine the wrath of the Galatians upon hearing of a letter of Paul's, which being addressed to themselves they would know to be fictitious, containing such expressions as "O foolish Galatians," "I stand in doubt of you." How quickly and how furiously they would denounce the forgery! That these chiding letters were accepted without protest by the churches to which they were addressed can only be explained by admitting that those churches believed in their authenticity.

These things a forger could not do. Nor could he well avoid making a plain reference to the fall of Jerusalem. Nor could he insert obscurities which are obscure merely because they relate to prior stages in the development of church dogma. Nor could he have omitted all reference to the virgin birth of Christ, so outstanding a belief in the second century. When we add to these considerations the intimate and unimportant details, the numerous complex and undesigned conformities of the epistles with each

other and with Acts—and the theorists might condescend to read Paley on this subject even though he is nowadays regarded as a back number—we can hardly withhold our assent from the proposition that the principal Pauline epistles are really from the hand of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Nevertheless the theorists make two points of first rate importance which it behooves us to examine most carefully. But let this examination be prefaced by a general statement of axiomatic force. If two opposing theories are each supported by an apparently unanswerable argument, then we must determine which theory to accept by the weight of the other considerations. If the one theory is confirmed by a multitude of secondary proofs and the other by none save the single one of major importance, then this major argument is not really unanswerable but must be susceptible of a reasonable explanation. Now for the authenticity of the Pauline epistles involving of course the real existence of Jesus, many of the arguments, notably the first and the last in the second paragraph preceding, are as strong as any that has ever been urged against it, and in addition there are the many other affirmative arguments briefly outlined. Let us then examine the two strong points made against the historical basis of Christianity in accordance with the principle just enunciated.

The first of these points relates to the silence of contemporaries, a silence which the critics justly claim is well-nigh perfect. Save for a cursory word there is no reference to the Gospel story in any profane author of the first century, and almost none in the first half of the second century, whereas the events narrated are so astounding that we should expect them to be blazoned in every writing and language of the Roman Empire. The second argument is that, leading from the primitive Judaic Christianity of Jesus and his disciples to Christianity as preached by Paul, there is no indication of a process. "The zealot (Paul) for orthodox Judaism has no sooner been brought to see in Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah than he goes on to regard him as the Son of God sent down to earth for the sake of men, preaches deliverance from the Law, and appeals for his new conviction to a revelation of the Spirit. . . . It is simply unthinkable that Paul the Jew, who had persecuted the Christian community out of religious conviction, should almost immediately introduce this colossal reform of a belief which he had only just begun to share."

The first argument has been answered in part fairly well. The silence is not so absolute as the critics would have us believe.

Suetonius in 120 A. D., Tacitus in 115 and Pliny in 112, approximate dates, all make unmistakable reference to the Gospel story, while Clement of Rome gives ample Christian evidence in 95 A. D. The passages in Josephus referring to John the Baptist and to James, "brother of the so-called Christ," have withstood all attacks upon their genuineness. It has been pointed out that but the tiniest remnant of the literature of those times has been preserved, hence that it is fallacious to argue that these are all the references to Christianity which ever existed. Nevertheless we cannot but admit that matter pertaining to Christianity is, and doubtless would be were all preserved, far more meager than is thinkable considering the stupendous nature of the events described in the Gospels. Critics are therefore compelled, aside from other considerations, to reject the more wondrous stories told of Jesus, his stilling the storm and his walking on the waves, the raising of Lazarus and his own resurrection, and reduce the narrative to that of an obscure Jewish reformer gifted with uncommon healing power who went about preaching the near coming of the Kingdom of God until he was seized and executed by the authorities.

But there is a reason deeper than the mere unimportance of the events for the silence of contemporaries regarding them, and this is to be found in the nature of the new religion and the character of its adherents. Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the fact that Christianity is a Greek religion, having it is true a Jewish background but appealing really to Greeks. Its documents were written in Greek by Greeks for Greeks, and its speculations are Greek to the core. Almost nothing of pure Judaism was permitted to stand, and aside from Hebrews and Revelations nearly every document is saturated with Greek thought and Greek ideals. The Jewish origin is distilled through the Greek interpretation until the characters act and talk far more like Greeks than like Jews. In a great many passages the general contempt for the Jews finds expression and they are held up as bigoted, hostile, violent and incredibly stupid. The Greek infusion colors the entire medium, and the basic Jewish element is to be found only by diligent analysis. It is a Greek religion, not a Jewish.

Now from the beginning the message of Christianity was addressed exclusively to the humble and oppressed of the world, publicans, sinners, slaves, all that labor and are heavy laden. The rich are explicitly and almost wholly excluded, they can at best enter the Kingdom only because all things are possible to God. The Kingdom is a topsy-turvy world wherein the last shall be first, and the poor

and meek and merciful are blessed beyond all others. Indeed a prospective disciple must give away all his possessions before he is accepted. But in the Kingdom these lowest of the lower classes shall rest in Abraham's bosom and shall judge all the people of the earth.

Such a kingdom could appeal with power to none save the lowly for whom alone it seemed prepared. As a result we find that in no age of the world have the educated and intelligent accepted Christianity or as a class believed its doctrines except with emendations and reservations which made of them something quite different from what the priesthood inculcated or the commonalty received. This is so obvious a fact that it has hardly been given proper consideration. The growth of the new religion was almost altogether among the ignorant and uncritical, peasants, rabble, soldiers, slaves. Not until its numbers gave it strength did ambitious politicians seize upon the church as an instrument of advancement, and then they used it with the same unscrupulousness that they had formerly used other and secular associations of the people. So it has been throughout the centuries. So it is to-day. Not a politician but professes unswerving attachment to orthodoxy, though intimates know that often his professions are purest hypocrisy. But there is to-day this great difference in practice. All things pertaining to the common people, their thoughts, beliefs, wishes, their condition and their welfare, are matters of intense interest to the educated class, whereas in antiquity they were matters of the most supreme indifference. So long as the proletariat remained quiet no one cared what its individual members thought or how they spent their time. It is with the utmost difficulty that we can learn anything at all about them, forced as we are to rely wholly upon mere chance allusions. It never occurred to Herodotus or Thucydides or Livy or Cicero or any other ancient writer, who indeed wrote for his own class exclusively, that any one could be interested in the ordinary affairs of the lower orders; they simply did not count.

This attitude of antiquity has often been mentioned, but it has seldom been properly insisted upon or justly comprehended. Indeed it is almost impossible thoroughly to realize the utter unconcern of the educated man of ancient times for the common herd. The latter might have been on the planet Mars for all he cared. He wrote of "freemen," of "all mankind," of "human rights," but in every case he must be understood to refer only to fellow members of the upper class; just as to-day when we say that in our country the people choose their rulers we mean not the people but the male

voters. Hence a religious belief practically confined to the humble would as a matter of course be quite ignored by ancient authors who would at the same time give full details of any philosophic system which numbered educated men among its professors. Only when something extraordinary occurred, as the orgies of Bacchus or the persecution by Nero, would the matter be mentioned, and at such times the chances are that events would be distorted and wrongly described in accordance with the misunderstandings in the minds of those who had at most only a passing interest. Not until Christianity became a political force would it receive any consideration from the writers of the period, and it is not to be wondered at that this "religion of the gutter" passed unnoticed during the first century of its existence.

The absence of any appearance of process of change from the preaching of Jesus to the preaching of Paul is a more difficult matter to understand. The fact is indisputable, though it would seem better to call Paul's doctrine a development rather than a reform of Judaic Christianity. There is no doubt that all that distinguished Jesus and his immediate disciples from other Jews was that while the latter still expected a Messiah the former believed that the Messiah had come and that Jesus was he. Paul, however, taught from first to last that this Messiah, whom Jews thought about as in all respects human, was the Son of God, divine in essence, existent from the beginning of time, offering, through faith in his resurrection alone and without regard to observance of the Mosaic law, salvation to all men, Jew and Gentile. There is an enormous difference between these presentations. The first is exclusively Jewish and looks upon people of other nationalities as "dogs." The second is universal in application and claims for the Jews no advantage beyond a prior opportunity. That such a teaching could be promulgated by a born Jew, educated in the Mosaic law and an adherent of the strict sect of the Pharisees, is so surprising a circumstance, that it calls for the most careful scrutiny.

One consideration is apparent. Since Paul was the first to advance the new idea and since it was fully developed in his earliest utterances, the process of change must have begun and been fulfilled in his mind between his conversion and the commencement of his apostolic labors. There can be no such thing as a gradual development through different thinkers and with successive additions to the original idea. And if such a change in Paul's attitude cannot be shown to be possible, we will have to reject the Pauline authorship of the epistles and will probably have to follow Smith,

Robertson, Van Manen et al., into a denial of all historical basis for Christianity.

Who was this man Paul who was responsible for so radical a change in primitive belief? He himself tells he was a native of Tarsus, a Jew by birth of the tribe of Benjamin, a pupil of Gamaliel and a strict Pharisee. By implication he informs us he was Greek speaking, as were so many of the Dispersion. The nature of the claims enhance the probability of their truth; for to any one having knowledge of the prejudices of that age it is almost inconceivable that a Greek or Roman would pretend to be a member of the despised Jewish race. Perhaps for this very reason Luke asserts, or causes Paul to assert, that the latter was a free-born Roman citizen. He was as a matter of course a member of the working class, by trade a tentmaker.

Paul's character is perhaps the most clearly marked of all the New Testament personages. He was disputatious, quick to anger but quickly appeased, jealous of his rights and certain of his divine mission. He was impulsive to a fault, praising and blaming in alternate breaths, prone to make digressions and helter skelter in his argumentation, intolerant of opposition and personally stubborn beyond measure, as he had great need to be, considering the persecution he braved and the opposition he encountered from both within and without the church. Most important of all, he was a born visionary, guided and governed throughout his life by influences which he took to be direct revelations of the Spirit and which it never occurred to him to doubt or question. As a Greek Jew he was naturally far more open to Gentile ideas than could have been a native of Jerusalem, and he was impregnated more perhaps than he himself realized with Hellenic philosophy and modes of thought.

In the two particulars last mentioned, his supposed spiritual guidance and his Grecian open-mindedness, is to be found the key to his character. So long as he held to the orthodox Jewish faith he followed his convictions to their logical extreme and did not hesitate to attack those he deemed enemies of his religion. Converted by some subjective experience to the faith he had been persecuting and accepting his inward monitor as infallible, he went unflinchingly to the farthest limit of the implications of his new belief. His was no halfway nature. Given a proposition from God, as he doubted not, he accepted its uttermost deduction without hint of evasion, and if it conflicted with another deduction, he scrupled

not to accept both, leaving to his Master to reconcile the apparent contradiction.

Let us try to follow the course of his reasoning, beginning with the primary proposition that ruled his thought. Jesus rose from the dead. Paul was firmly convinced of this because he believed he had seen the risen Jesus. An ordinary human being cannot rise from the dead. Therefore Jesus was not an ordinary human being. His deeds and teachings were good, hence he could not have been a demon. If he was divine he was the Son of God as he had claimed, and was such in a different sense from that in which all the righteous are deemed sons of God. A divinity would not visit mankind except upon a mission of transcendent importance, and this mission Jesus had himself announced. He was sent by his Father to offer salvation to those whom the Father loved. But God was a universal Father, was the one and only God, had created all men and loved all men. Therefore salvation was to be offered to all who would accept it; that is, to all who would accept the Son. As Jesus was in life a Jew, salvation came by the Jews and was offered to them first, Jews were the chosen vessels of the new dispensation, witness himself; but after the Jews the Gentiles might also accept salvation. By doing so they became adopted brothers of the Lord Jesus and joint heirs to the Kingdom. But it was plainly impossible for all the Gentiles to put themselves under the Mosaic law, which not even the strictest of Jews could fully and faithfully observe. What portion of the law, then, was it essential for them to accept? Circumcision? Nay, men were saved before that rite was instituted. It was after all but a symbol and availed nothing since salvation was the result of a mental state. The sabbath? The moons? The festivals? But the whole public ministry of Jesus was a protest against over scrupulous outward observance of these Mosaic legalities; they could not be indispensable requisites. On mature thought no ceremonies beyond those established by the Lord himself could be essential. The Lord certainly would not offer salvation to all mankind and yet impose a condition which would restrict its acceptance to a handful of orthodox Jews whom he had consistently opposed and who had been responsible for his own execution as a malefactor. It was therefore plain that the whole Mosaic law was now abrogated, and salvation was free to all who would confess that Jesus was the Lord and that God raised him from the dead.

Such a course of reasoning is hardly possible in a Palestinian Jew, but it is not inconceivable in a Jew of Tarsus. While there is

no record of Tarsus having at that time received the Roman franchise, it was at all events Greek. Its inhabitants would therefore be free thinkers, open to new conceptions and accustomed through the influx of oriental ideas to the deification of human beings. Even the Jewish residents must have become if not prone to entertain at least somewhat familiar with such notions and far less mentally indurated than their kindred of Judea. If Paul was really a Roman citizen, a thing rendered doubtful by his own failure to make such a claim, he would be all the more susceptible to such influences. But at all events, with a nature such as his, and starting from the premise accepted without reservation that Jesus rose from the dead, he could very conceivably arrive at the conclusion indicated. And having reached that conviction, he would assuredly have thrown himself headlong into the battle and ardently pressed his belief upon all whom he could induce to listen.

So simple a deduction could have taken but a brief period to complete. A few days, not the three years of preparation he mentions, would have been amply sufficient. And once convinced, Paul most certainly ascribed the teaching to his ever present guide, the holy Spirit with whom he tells us he took counsel, and not creature in human form, be he disciple or apostle or pillar of the church, could shake him one hair from his firm foundation. God gave him the shining truth, no man could add aught to him, no whit was he behind any apostle, and he would preach his doctrine to the world in the face of Peter and James themselves, who of a surety represented the Lord no better and no more effectively than he did.

Thus there should be and could be no evidence of a process so far as Paul himself was concerned, and the epistles quite correctly give evidence of none. But outside of Paul the indications of process are plainly apparent. The other apostles oppose him, he quarrels with them violently, his own churches show a strong tendency to lag behind and he scolds them sharply for listening to the Judaizers. He is even constrained to relent in so far as to grant that those born under the law might maintain their allegiance. But he holds fast to the proposition that salvation without the law is for all, and he forces his doctrine upon the growing church. Nevertheless it gained no full acceptance during his lifetime; in fact not until the Jewish hierarchy was overthrown and the temple worship extinguished did Paul's Christianity ride triumphant.

Another objection to the Paul of the epistles deserves a word. It is urged that the references to church organization, to deacons, readers etc., and the allusions to Old Testament texts evidence a

late date when the churches had had time to develop, and to acquire both a tradition and an acquaintance with scripture. These objections seem trivial. Christianity was preached upon a basis of Old Testament prophecy, and it would be impossible that Gentile churches should not have had from the beginning sufficient acquaintance with the Septuagint to understand easily all the allusions in Paul's epistles. Paul possessed much executive ability if his letters are any criterion, sufficient at least for the primitive organization of the church. That a new religious association can be, and tends inevitably to be thoroughly organized, particularly if it meets with opposition, is plainly to be seen in our own time in the Salvation Army and the Mormon church, both of which are far more elaborately organized than were the early Christian societies. Similar examples will occur to any reader.

The course of early Christianity may now be outlined from a critical standpoint with fair assurance of certainty. Jesus was a traveling Galilean preacher announcing the speedy coming of the Kingdom of God and calling on his hearers to prepare for it through repentance and righteous action. He addressed the Jews exclusively, having no message for any others. But his natural benevolence and love of humanity were such that he could not resist doing a good deed to any Gentile who chanced to cross his path, and this kind-heartedness had important doctrinal consequences later on. He found himself possessed of surprising healing powers, and because of this and of the following which his lovable character drew about him, he came to believe himself to be the promised Messiah of the Jews. But his opposition to the burdensome formality of rabbinical Judaism aroused the enmity of the ruling hierarchy which seized him when he went up to Jerusalem to observe a Passover and executed him for sedition and blasphemy. A resurrection story quickly arose, perhaps because of the disappearance of his corpse, and soon it was confidently believed by his disciples that God had raised him from the dead. Paul now entered on the scene, and by a course of reasoning perhaps like that suggested, arrived at the conclusion that salvation was offered to all men on easy terms, if they would but hasten to accept it before the destruction of the earth which would shortly take place. The Greek world, familiar with apotheosis and ripe for such a preachment since it was without any real religious belief, caught eagerly at Paul's announcement, and through the lower classes the new religion ran like a conflagration. Educated men held aloof; indeed they probably heard of the "superstition" but seldom, as when some outbreak of fanaticism called it to their

attention. Sometimes there was a persecution when thriving industries were threatened or when a scapegoat was needed, but on the whole the religion progressed unnoticed through the underworld, a great part of which was on fire with a fervid zeal before the upper classes had any inkling of what was going on. When the ruling aristocracy did find it out, they sought to extirpate the superstition as dangerous to the existing order, but by then the number of believers had become too great to be so overwhelmed. At length a military leader saw in the new religion a powerful weapon to further his ambition, and by setting up as its champion won his way to the empire of the world. At once the politicians flocked to the faith militant just as they had scorned the faith submissive, and by their influence the "pernicious superstition" of the first century, not without great absorption of pagan ideas and pagan ceremonies, became the Roman Church Triumphant of the fourth, which has endured the storms of all succeeding ages.

A NEW HISTORY OF THE EARLY WORLD.

BY THE EDITOR.

ONE book has been needed for a long time more than any other by teachers and professors of general history as well as by the reading public for their general information, and a recent work from the pen of Prof. James H. Breasted of the University of Chicago entitled *Ancient Times, a History of the Early World*¹ fills the demand admirably. It not only accomplishes the task with the authority of a writer well equipped for the work by his historical and philological education, but the subject is presented with the skill of a fascinating narrator who holds the reader's attention in showing the growth of man's intellectuality from crude beginnings through the development of the earliest civilization down to the establishment of the Christian church.

In the last half century our historical outlook has been considerably widened. Formerly our history lessons in school began with Greece, and ancient history consisted mainly of a tale of Rome's development. Egypt was known only as the mysterious land of pyramids, and to Babylon there were some interesting references in Herodotus and the Bible. Since then expeditions have been sent

¹ Published by Ginn and Co. of Boston. Pp. xx. 742; 8 colored plates and numerous maps and illustrations. Price, \$1.60.