THE HUMANITY OF JESUS?

CONTESTING A PROTEST.

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IT is always pleasurable and profitable to meet Mr. Kampmeier in the arena of controversy. Always he has something interesting to say and says it with clearness, directness, and precision, so that one may join issue sharply and grapple hand to hand. In this regard he reminds one of Schmiedel and only by contrast of the majority of "historicists." Especially, however, his attacks offer admirable occasions for strengthening the positions attacked.

In the May number of The Open Court, Mr. Kampmeier directs a very earnest "Protest" to the present writer. His general complaint is against the air of confidence becoming more and more apparent in the ranks of the anhistoricists (if such a frightful word be justified by such analogies as anharmonic). Thus it seems that Das freie Wort announces that the pure-divine and non-human character of the Jesus may now be regarded as a settled fact. Such a proclamation may indeed be early, but it is not alone. In a review of Ecce Deus, Baars some months ago called upon the liberals to abandon their position now rendered untenable and range themselves on the side of the new doctrine of the pure divinity of Jesus. Other reviewers have thought similarly; an illustrious Biblicist has in a private letter announced his abandonment of Jesus the Man, and to judge from their printed statements, a number of others are wavering and almost persuaded to become Protochristians. Whence it might seem that the German fortnightly, even if a little too previous, is nothing worse, but merely anticipates a fast-forming judgment.

However, the more especial grievance of Mr. Kampmeier lies

against a recent statement made by the writer, that "no shred of evidence for the humanity of the Jesus has yet been produced." The statement may seem a trifle bold, but it is not too bold, and it is hereby reaffirmed with emphasis. If there be any such shreds of evidence the world would be much indebted to any one for their early production. The nearest approach yet made thereto seems to be found in the Pillars of Schmiedel, generally recognized as a if not the "chief bulwark" of the liberal position. Schmiedel himself has distinctly declared that there are no other really cogent proofs of the historicity, that but for these or similar passages we should not be able to affirm the human existence of Jesus. But how has it fared with these Pillars? Windisch in the Theol. Rundschau admits that they have been "powerfully assailed," that Ecce Deus proves that Schmiedel has attempted the impossible, and that at least five of the nine must be surrendered as "not convincing," "not able to bear" (nicht tragfähig) the burden of proof. Among the five thus surrendered is what seems to be by far the strongest (Mark x. 34), the cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" than which nothing in the New Testament sounds at first more human. All of these Pillars are examined carefully in Ecce Deus, where it is shown that none of them yields one scintilla of the evidence for which they have been invoked. Windisch would still "let four of them count," especially the word to the rich man, "why callest thou me good?" But this reads in Matthew, "Why askest thou me about the Good?" and it is shown clearly in Ecce Deus that the passage offers no evidence in point. Meyboom in the Theol. Tijdschrift seems disposed to accept the contentions of Ecce Deus at this point. But in any case, when five of the nine Pillars admittedly crumble, who can any longer put faith in the other four? And how bizarre to rest the historical character of Jesus on four uncertain, ambiguous, and isolated phrases! Neumann and Meltzer have tried to strengthen these pillars by adding to their number, but with what nugatory results is clearly shown in Ecce Deus. Even Windisch puts little trust in this second colonnade, declaring they must be "sifted," and the conservative Dibellius had already shown (1911) that much the strongest-seeming pillar in this group (Matt. xi. 18, 19) is by no means historical but merely the church's interpretation of a parable of Jesus. We may repeat then that these passages at present present no evidence of the historicity in question.

It seems highly important to observe closely the logical situation at this point. It might very well be that we should find some

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2 See the quotation, Eternal Gospel, p. 33.
passage in very early canonic or uncanonic Scripture that seemed quite irreconcilable with the notion of the primitive divinity and non-humanity of the Jesus. True, no such passage has thus far been found, but it might be. Would that prove the humanity? Very far from it! As argued in Ecce Deus and as now conceded by Windisch, what might appear to us to be a contradiction need by no means have seemed such to some mind or minds among the primitive Christians. Their ways of thinking and types of consciousness were very varied and in some cases departed very widely from the European and American of to-day. It is entirely futile then for even Schmiedel to attempt to wrest the historicity from a few isolated verses of doubtful interpretation. Such a weighty doctrine can not be supported by such slender and sporadic pillars, even were they of granite and not of sand. If the doctrine of the pure-human Jesus were true, it would not have to rest on a few such lonely props; it would be found ingrained in the history of the epoch, a part and parcel of the whole web of events. To take it away would not be like removing some more or less superfluous thread or flounce from the garment, but like unraveling its whole texture and reducing it to a shapeless mass. The human personality of Jesus, if it be indeed the center and emanative focus of Protochristianity, must pervade, permeate, and penetrate the whole fabric of the new religion, must vitalize it at every point, must form at once the necessary and the sufficient explanation of most or all of its distinctive features. Now it is notorious that such is not the case. The example of Paul alone is sufficient at this juncture. However much Paulinism may employ the notion of the divine Christ, it makes no use at all of the human life, teachings, and personality of Jesus. Liberals have felt keenly the imperative necessity of finding the human Jesus in the very earliest doctrine and history of the Christian propaganda; hence not only the strenuous striving of Schmiedel and his school to establish the Pillars, but also the unresting zeal of nearly all in trying to discover, decipher, and delineate that marvelous human personality. All such efforts have proved utterly futile, fanciful, and mutually contradictory. In Ecce Deus this famous argument from personality is carefully considered, and it is shown clearly not only that there is no shred of evidence for the existence of any such single human personality, but that there is a large number of clear indications of its non-existence; that the witness of early Christian history is at many points directly against the historicity in question, that so far from explaining the course of history, the hypothesis of historicity makes everything unintelligible
and unexplainable. This most famous of liberal arguments has indeed been exactly reversed: its tenfold weight now falls wholly into the opposite scale. Professor Meyboom, of Groningen, who is surely not sympathetic with Ecce Deus, nevertheless in writing of the book in Theol. Tijdschrift (1912), after quoting from its treatment of this argument from personality, sums up the situation in these words (p. 44): "Am I in error when I maintain that here the finger is skillfully laid upon a weak spot in the traditional conception of the course of events at the appearance and first development of Christianity?" It is noteworthy also that in Case's recent work on the Historicity of Jesus the favorite proof from personality shines most through its absence.

But the two foregoing arguments are not the only ones that "in dim eclipse disastrous twilight shed on half the" critics "and with fear of change perplex" professors. The Pauline witness is fundamental and in the minds of some (as Reinach) is the only one that has genuine evidential value. Now in Ecce Deus this witness is cross-examined and with the result, that it not only fails to attest, but also tells powerfully against the historicity in question. In his recent Taufe und Abendmahl im Urchristentum, Heitmüller, certainly a most acute and liberal critic, seems to surrender the citadel itself (as is noted in Eternal Gospel), recognizing as contended in Ecce Deus that the view set forth in 1 Cor. xi. 23 ff. is a later "theologizing interpretation" of the earlier view given in 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. Moreover Schläger in a very recent thorough and methodic study (published in Theol. Tijdschrift because the German journals shrank from printing it!) has confirmed these conclusions (of Ecce Deus) at every point, so that we may now safely say that the Pauline witness is not for but distinctly against the "historicity."

Mr. Kampmeier does indeed cite the celebrated verse in 1 Cor. xv. 28, that "the Son shall be subject to the Father, that God may be all things in all," as evidence that Paul thought of Jesus as a human personality. One would think this would be among the last verses in the New Testament to be called by Mr. Kampmeier to the witness stand. His notion seems to be that the subjection of Son to Father implies that the Son was the "Jewish Messiah" "of human descent." Here must the present writer also be allowed to "protest." It is not a pure Jewish consciousness that is speaking.

3 Heb ik ongelijk als ik beweer, dat hier op handige wijze de finger gelegd wordt op een zwakke plek in de traditionelle vorstelling van den gang van zaken bij het optreden en de eerste ontwikkeling van het Christendom?
4 University of Chicago Press, 1912.
So much is plain in the phrase that "God may be all things in all." This (as set forth in Ecc Deus) is the homeomy of Anaxagoros, a profound and favorite Greek philosophic speculation, according to which the seeds of things were so universally diffused that in every thing were to be found the elements of all things. Indeed it is well known that the writings of "The Apostle" (by whom is not necessarily meant Saul of Tarsus) are deeply tinged with Stoicism and other Hellenisms as shown, e. g., in the argumentative use of "God forbid," a use peculiar to Stoical disputation.

Now it is not at all strange that a half-Greek half-Hebrew consciousness should strive to reconcile the notion of Jesus the Saviour-God with a pure philosophic monotheism. The task may not be an easy one, in fact it seems never in 1900 years to have been accomplished perfectly. But it is not the only persistent problem of theology or philosophy. Indeed it is only one aspect of a perpetual riddle, the relation of the individual and the universal, which not even Hegel could unravel or see through. Perhaps there is nothing better to be said about the relation of Jesus to God Most High than is hinted in the great Pauline phrase "the light of the glory of God in the person (aspect, countenance, προσωπεία) of Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). It might remind one of a particular, or of the all-important singular, as contrasted with the general solution of a differential equation.

The at least half-mythologic conception of the relation in question as that of Son to Father seems to have made the strongest appeal and to have established itself most firmly. Alongside thereof has asserted itself the far more philosophic idea of the Spirit, identified by "The Apostle" with the Christ, but later sharply distinguished therefrom. The "Father" also has been recognized as only an aspect of Deity so that we now have the orthodox dogma of the three persons (aspects) of the one God, "not confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance." There is in truth nothing to say against such a doctrine, unless one should ask, Why three rather than four or thirty or a thousand? We might ask a similar question about the dimensions of space, and neither question may be finally unanswerable. Three is in fact a very odd number. With such matters, however, we have no present concern, further than to insist that there is nothing at all in the Corinthian verse to imply any natural human history of the Son who surrenders to the Father. The old-world consciousness felt perfectly at home in dealing with Son-Gods as well as Father-Gods.

Nay, we must not even think of the Jewish mode of thought
as excluding the notion of purely heavenly beings subject to the Jehovah-God. It is well known that such celestials peopled the realms of later Jewish imagination, nor had they any human ancestry or earthly history whatever. Who were the parents of Michael, so prominent in Daniel? Or of Gabriel? If these, like Melchizedek, could dispense with parentage, what need of it for the Christ, for the Jesus, for the Saviour-God? Perhaps some did think of Messiah as earth-born. What of it? Others did not, and there was no reason why they should.

How familiar and even native to the Jewish mind was the idea of a Being purely divine yet subordinate to God Most High is clearly shown in the strange doctrine of Meṭaṭrōn. Hitherto in this whole discussion the present writer has carefully avoided broaching this all-important theme, since it deserves a volume rather, than a paragraph. However, it seems hard to maintain this reserve any longer or to avoid saying so much at least as the following: The rigorous rabbinical monotheism with which we are all familiar was be no means the only recognized form of Judaism. The notion of Jehovah's angel (Malak YHVH), frequent in the Old Testament, and that of Mediator, already present in Gal. iii. 19, 20 and apparently current, pervade both Hebrew writings and the Apocrypha. In the latter this heavenly and even divine Being is often called Enoch, also Michael, and Meṭaṭrōn, which latter name he bears preeminently in the former. In Greek and Latin the word is written Metator and is said to mean Guide. It looks very like a disguised reflection of Mithra, as Kohut contends. Many scholars identify this Being with the Logos of Philo, against the protest of Cohn. That profound Talmudist, Max Friedländer, in his Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus and elsewhere, identifies him with the early Gnostic Horus, "the surveyor or guardian of frontiers." Still other interpretations have been suggested.

For us the important point is that this Meṭaṭrōn is clothed with attributes and powers very nearly equal to those of God Most High. Thus, when Elisha b. Abuyah beheld Meṭaṭrōn in Heaven he thought there were two Deities (Hag. 15a). When God wept over the temple destroyed Meṭaṭrōn fell on his face, exclaiming, "I will weep, but weep not Thou," whereupon God answered: "If thou wilt not suffer Me to weep, I will go whither thou canst not come, and there will I lament" (Lam. R., Introduction § 24). Compare Jer. xiii. 17 and John xiii. 33, "Whither I go, ye can not come." Meṭaṭrōn shares in the functions of God: during the first three quarters of the day he teaches children in the Law, during the last
quarter God himself teaches them (‘Ab. Zarah 3b). Involuntarily one thinks of freshman, sophomore, junior,—senior! He is a “mighty scribe,” little lower than God (Ps. viii. 6). We are reminded of the secretary-angel of Ezekiel (ix. 2, 3, 11, x. 2, 6, 7). He is a youth, suggesting the mysterious youth of Mark xiv. 51, 52; xvi, 5—a supernatural being. He bears witness to the sins of mankind, recalling the “faithful witness” of Revelation. Most of all, however, he bears the sacred ineffable name, the tetragrammaton YHVH, for in Ex. xxiii. 21, it is written, “My name is in him.” Nevertheless, he must not be worshiped, since the same passage commands, “Exchange not Me for him,” (Sanh. 38b). However, it is conceded (Jewish Encyclopedia, VIII, 408 a, b,) that “angel worship was not unknown in certain Jewish circles,” and that prayers addressed to angels insinuated themselves even into the liturgy. Even in Daniel xii. 1, Michael appears as Intercessor, along with whom Metatron is frequently mentioned by Gnostics as the mediator of revelation. Even when Abraham ibn Ezra, commenting on the Pentateuch, finely says: “The angel that intermediates between man and God is reason,” he is still not far from John and Theophilus, not far from Heraclitus and Philo, with all of whom the Logos (Reason) serves to link man with God. Enough. It is superfluously clear that in Jewish conception Metatron was quite in line with the Second Person in the Trinity, that, if not in official, at least in unofficial Judaism, the idea of a Vice-Elohim, a Pro-Jehovah, a Mediator-God, was perfectly naturalized, was popular, and was widely active. This mid-Being or Mesites (by which latter term Lactantius describes Jesus) was wholly divine, without any tincture of humanity, and yet was distinctly lower than God Most High, with whom he was even contrasted. Herewith then not only Kampmeier’s obstacles but all the Pillars of Schmiedel are swept aside completely and beyond recall.

It appears then that even if we should regard the consciousness in 1 Cor. xv. 28, as pure Jewish, there would still be no implication whatever of any historical humanity in the Son, the Jesus. Neither can any argument at all be drawn from any alleged preconception of the Jews that the Messiah was to be human. On the contrary, such a conception would merely help to account for the humanization of the Jesus conceived at first as a pure divinity. It is evident and generally recognized that much of the Gospel story was devised to fulfil supposed prophecy. Still later we find Justin Martyr and others reasoning with confidence that so and so must have happened, because it was already typified in the Old Testament. If
then "the monotheistic Jesus-cult" was accepted by some one who identified the Jesus with the Christ (Messiah), and who had the notion that this latter was foreseen by the prophet as a man, such a worshiper had no logical choice: he had to think of his Jesus as having lived in Palestine, and very naturally he would invent a plausible "Life of Jesus"—there was nothing else he could do.

Lastly we come to Mr. Kampmeier's pièce de résistance, the brotherhood of James. It seems a little queer that he should lean so heavily on such a broken reed. The matter has already been discussed, and it must suffice here to resume some of the principal points:

1. In the Gospels the brethren of Jesus are more than once defined as having no blood-kinship. "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. "Go, tell my brethren," where plainly the disciples are intended. Unless then there be positive counter evidence we must understand the word brethren in this spiritual sense. No such counter evidence is found in the Gospels, as is shown in Ecce Deus.

2. In 1 Cor. ix. 5, "The Apostle" speaks of "the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Kephas." Combine this with the fact that there were many parties in Corinth, that some said "I am of Paul," others "I of Apollos," others "I of Kephas," others "I of Christ," and the suggestion presents itself instantly that "the brethren of the Lord" were such a party, the same or in line with those "of Christ," perhaps a select and inner circle of Messianists or other Christians. That these "brethren of the Lord" should be in Corinth or anywhere else a group of flesh-and-blood kinsmen of the man Jesus, who certainly cut no figure in the Gospel-story as even sympathetic with him, seems to be in the last degree improbable. The very name "brethren of the Lord" sounds very suspicious. Why not "brethren of Jesus," if such they were? Remember that Lord (Jehovah) is the very highest designation of the ascended Christ. Is it not incredible that such brothers-in-flesh, absolutely unknown as Christians, should receive such a superlative title?

3. In Gal. i. 19, we read of "James the brother of the Lord." The remarks already made apply with full force. As early as Jerome, already quoted in this discussion, the term brother was taken to refer not to blood-kinship but to spiritual likeness. Some one may say that this was done in the interest of the dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary. But nearly 150 years earlier, before such an interest was felt, we find the highly enlightened Origen
taking the same view. In c. Cels. I, 47, he says: "Paul the true disciple of Jesus says that he saw this James as brother of the Lord (brother, that is) because not so much of blood kinship or community of their education, as of character and reason." If it be said that Origen himself accepted the humanity of Jesus and perhaps the blood-brothership of James, the answer is, Certainly! But this merely strengthens our contention. If, for entirely independent reasons, although he conceded that James was a natural brother of Jesus, the ablest of all early expositors still held on the face of the text that "brother of the Lord" must refer to spiritual rather than carnal kinship, so much the more are we justified in so understanding it, we who find elsewhere no ground at all for granting any such consanguinity. It seems hard to imagine any reply to this reasoning.

4. Finally the testimony of Josephus, in the phrase "James the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ" (Ant. XX, 9, 1). Can there really be any doubt that this clause is interpolated? Let the reader reflect on the considerations already advanced in the article on "The Silence of Josephus and Tacitus." Neither have the arguments of Credner (who brackets the words as a Christian insertion) ever been answered. Let the reader also remember that Case claims no more than that it is "quite possible" that the Josephine reference to James is genuine (p. 256), while on the other hand Windisch (a hostile reviewer of Ecce Deus) admits that its demonstration of the "Silence of Josephus" hits the mark (ist treffend) in both cases and that Zahn, who among conservatives has no superior in learning or in acumen, now concedes that the James-passage also is interpolated, a part of "the falsified Josephus." Notice further the advance on New Testament phraseology, which has "brother of the Lord," but not "brother of Jesus." Each writer seems to have expressed himself correctly. The New Testament does not mean "brother of Jesus" and does not say it; the late interpolator of Josephus does mean it and does say it.

It is true that an honored critic, Rudolf Steck, of Bern, has come valiantly to the rescue of the Josephine testimony (Prot. Monatsh., 1912). But how and why? He perceives clearly, what Mr. Kampmeier should also perceive, that the phrase about James is most improbable in Josephus, if there be no previous mention of


6 Also that the critique of the passage in Tacitus is "equally worthy of attention" (ebenso beachtenswerth). This passage can then no longer be produced in "evidence"; for even if not proved an interpolation, it is at least discredited.
Jesus. He admits also, what any unbiased mind must admit, that the total silence of Josephus is hard or impossible to understand and must throw the gravest doubt upon the historicity of Jesus. Furthermore, he can not deny that the famous section (Ant. XVIII, 3. 3) as it stands is a Christian insertion. What then does he do in this desperate plight? He follows the Hollander Mensinga, who in the *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1884, proposed the hypothesis that there stood originally in Josephus a scurrilous account of the relations of Joseph and Mary, suggesting the story of Paulina in section 4, and provoking some deeply offended Christian to supplace it with the extant section. In this way it is hoped to break the silence of Josephus and save the "historicity of Jesus."

This "bare hypothesis," as Steck himself calls it, has certainly the merit of boldness, but what other? An airier imagination has seldom been engendered in the brain of any critic. It is of course superfluous to oppose any such fancy, further than to note that it wrecks even before it fairly starts out, and on the very simple fact, already noted in "The Silence of Josephus," that section 4 is an immediate continuation of section 2, as is shown in the opening words, "About the same time a second terrible thing confounded the Jews etc." In section 2 the first "terrible thing" has been detailed, the merciless slaughter in Jerusalem. This close connection of sections 2 and 4 shuts out any section 3. Steck indeed would translate ἰερόν by "strange" or "unusual" instead of "terrible." But that is not only against common usage but also against common sense. "Terrible" is the regular meaning of the word and in this case the necessary meaning. For only something terrible would have "confounded the Jews," that is, the Jewish people. To speak of an entirely unknown scandal touching two entirely unknown Galilean peasants as confounding the Jewish race, would be to move a smile hardly gentle enough for such grave discussion.

In all sincerity therefore we now ask, where are the shreds of evidence? Surely it is not enough to produce some fact consistent with the historicity but equally consistent with the anhistoricity. If the human character of the Jesus stood well established on independent basis, some of the facts passed in review might be regarded as confirmations. But which one can be regarded as a shred of evidence on its own account? It is by no means incumbent on us to show that our interpretations of the facts in question must be correct, but only that they may be correct, with no high degree of improbability. The Liberals do not advance their cause by producing passages that consist with their hypothesis of the historical
Jesus; they must produce something that requires that hypothesis for its reasonable explanation. This they have not done. Their texts are either equivocal or at best they lie under grave suspicion of being interpolations. In no court of justice would such texts be considered as "shreds of evidence." If a man owes you $100 and offers you in payment a bill or draft that smells of forgery, it is not a legal tender; nor if it be drawn on a bank or other institution of doubtful solvency would you accept it. Not even if he offer you a stately heap of such dubious paper would you be satisfied. You would only wonder how he happened to have so much of that kind and none of any other. Such is the case with regard to the texts in question. Not one is convincing; not one raises any considerable probability; all may easily and even naturally be understood in exactly the opposite sense.

But are there no other proofs? The historicists hint vaguely at various others, but they do not state any clearly or even intelligibly. Nor do they come forward with any disproofs of the many counter-arguments developed in Der vorchristliche Jesus and especially in Ecce Deus and Eternal Gospel. It is not strange that they appear to German reviewers to "have nothing tenable (stichhaltiges) to urge against Smith's thesis." Under these circumstances, while fully nine-tenths of the most important argumentation of these books remains virtually unassailed, it would seem to be questionable whether the "Protest" under consideration be thoroughly justified.