THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

A STUDY IN THE HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

BY THE EDITOR.

WHILE writing my little book The Pleroma, I felt the desirability of having a concise and clear résumé of the results of New Testament higher criticism, when I came across a useful little book by F. Crawford Burkitt on The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus,¹ which in many respects seems to satisfy the purpose. I cannot say that I agree with all the conclusions of Professor Burkitt, nor do I accept his standpoint, but I must grant that he here sets forth in a lucid and popular way the present state of conclusions generally accepted by New Testament criticism. He is a professional theologian, with a deep reverence for Jesus as the Christ and the founder of Christianity, yet his Christian faith does not bias his scientific work; he is most punctilious and honest in his statements, although they are by no means always favorable to the traditional conception of the life of Jesus.

Professor Burkitt points out that the most historical and reliable as well as the oldest document is the Gospel of Mark. It is derived from an Aramaic original which goes far in proving the historicity of Jesus himself. Not only have Aramaic words such as amen, Abba, Boanerges, (a misspelling probably for bene reges), Eli Eli sabachthani, been retained in the Greek version, but also the entire atmosphere of the narrative is Jewish. This is true of Mark and also of Matthew and Luke. Says Professor Burkitt:

"Apart from questions of language and purely literary criticism, the three Synoptic Gospels might be translations from the Aramaic. The main ideas of the Synoptic Gospels, the fundamental phrases round which move the thoughts belonging to the Gospel, all have their explanation and illustration from contemporary Judaism. The Kingdom of God, the Christ or Messiah, the Day of Judgment, treasure in heaven, Abraham's bosom,—all these are

Jewish ideas, entirely foreign to the native thought of the Graeco-Roman world. We hear nothing in the Gospels about the Immortality of the Soul, much about Resurrection at the last day; nothing about 'Virtue,' much about 'Righteousness,' little about Purification, much about the Forgiveness of Sin. Even the polemic against heathenism is absent."

The picture of Jesus, however, which is presented by this oldest and most reliable document, the Gospel of Mark, is very different from the Christ ideal which later generations have formed:

"Undoubtedly there are many, coming from very different philosophical and theological camps, to whom the Gospel according to Mark appears to be an inadequate interpretation of our Lord. It does not satisfy the modern philosophical liberal, who would like to regard the mission of Jesus as 'purely religio-ethical and humanitarian.' The philosophical liberal finds fewer moral maxims in Mark than in Matthew and Luke, while at the same time he is shocked by the description of a number of miracles,—mostly, it is true, of healing,—the details of which he feels himself obliged to explain away. But the picture drawn in Mark is hardly more satisfactory from the orthodox conservative point of view. In Wellhausen's phrase, 'we hear of Disciples and we wonder how He comes to have them.' Till our eyes become accustomed to the atmosphere it is difficult to recognize the conventional Saviour, with the gentle unindividualized face, in the stormy and mysterious Personage portrayed in the second Gospel. 'And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them, and they were amazed, and some as they followed were afraid'—as we read the story in Mark we follow Jesus on his way, and we hardly know why or whither."

The problem how to explain the many literal agreements of the three first Gospels has been solved by the united labors of many scholars during the last century. Prof. J. J. Griesbach started in the right direction by publishing a synopsis of their coincidences; further investigations furnished convincing evidence in favor of the priority of either Mark, or the original used by Mark, called by the Germans Urmarkus, i. e., Proto-Mark; and finally Professor Wellhausen completed the work by proving that Mark was known to the two other synoptic writers in the same shape as we now have it, both in text and contents.

Accordingly, Mark's Gospel is, historically considered, the most authentic account of the life of Jesus. This is not very convenient news for the traditional conception of Christianity. Says Professor Burkitt:

"The ultimate difficulty felt by so many modern critics about the Gospel of Mark is not the minor discrepancies in the narrative, though they are present, or the tales of miracle, for it is always possible to allow for unscientific description or exaggeration. The difficulty lies in its presentation of the actual contents of the 'Gospel' itself and the career of Jesus. According to these critics, Mark has not only put in features of the Ministry that he might have
left out, he has left out things, and those the most important, that he ought to have put in. Where, they say, is the Teaching of Jesus? Mark gives us neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the Parable of the Prodigal Son. One who considers that Mark used Q confesses that the use made of it is ‘by no means characterized by sympathetic and appreciative insight.’ And if, as tradition seems to assert, the ultimate source of the Evangelist’s information be St. Peter himself, is it possible to suppose that the real characteristics of our Lord’s career could have been thrown so completely out of focus?

“It may readily be granted that most of these objections are weighty, if only we can be sure of the foundation upon which they rest. But it is the foundation itself that is insecure. The objections all assume that Jesus was really and primarily an ethical teacher, or a social reformer or both.”

Here Professor Burkitt touches upon a point which is crucial. Many theologians, and those of the liberal school are by no means excepted, keep in their mind an ideal of Christ and allow themselves to be influenced by it in their study of the historical Jesus. This is the punctum saliens where the personal equation of a scholar is apt to vitiate his whole work and we appreciate that Professor Burkitt himself, although he comes from orthodox quarters, is remarkably free from bias. He takes frequent occasion to criticise Prof. Benjamin Wisner Bacon of Yale, who in spite of his liberalism is hampered by his preconceived notion of Jesus as “purely religio-ethical and humanitarian,” whose attitude he describes as “the sane and well-poised mind of the plain mechanic of Nazareth.”

It becomes more and more evident that the historical Jesus was certainly not the philanthropic gentle preacher that he is frequently pictured in Unitarian pulpits, and we have reason to believe that he was an exorcist of evil spirits, a child of his narrow surroundings, a fanatic who was deeply tainted with the prejudices of his race and age.

That the historical Jesus was not the ideal teacher he is popularly believed to be, with a wide outlook into the future and broad humanitarian interests, is conceded even by Professor Bacon, who says:  

“Jesus has no idea of founding a new religion”; and in another passage (p. 2) Professor Bacon insists that Jesus brought “glad tidings to men heavy laden with the legalism of the scribes.” He says:

“Jesus perished as the champion of the plain men—the wage-earners, to whose class he belonged, the fishermen of Galilee, the ‘publicans and sinners’ who followed and trusted him; of the plain man’s ‘right to be called a son of

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2 Bacon, Beginnings, p. xx. That such a judgment has to be passed upon Mark’s use of Q is an argument for disbelieving that Mark knew Q at all. [For an explanation of what Q means see pp. 603-600.—Ed.]

3 The Founding of the Church, pp. 2-4.
God.' He was dubbed by the orthodox 'a friend of publicans and sinners,' and he was crucified in the attempt to vindicate for the common people the full right of 'son.'"

Doubtful as this interpretation of the lifework and the struggle of Jesus appears to be Professor Bacon concedes the horizon of Jesus was limited to Judea. 'He says:

"The battle was fought in the arena of Judaism. Its issues were drawn between the petty sects and cliques and castes of that race, which but for its religious genius and literature would be rated only as one of the lesser peoples of Syria. If Jesus ever thought of it as concerning all humanity in its issues, save as humanity might become a penumbra—an adjunct—of the Jewish empire to which the nation then looked forward, it certainly was not till after his death that his disciples extended their view to this broader horizon."

Professor Wellhansen has defined the historical significance of Mark, but he has done more; he has also proved that Matthew and Luke have used at least one other common source, which he calls "Q," an abbreviation for the German word Quelle, and the nature of this source of the first and third Gospels is admirably set forth by Professor Harnack in his book The Sayings of Jesus, so called because Professor Harnack identifies Q with the lost book called Logia by Papias. The facts are well summed up by Professor Burkitt thus:

"The Gospels of Matthew and Luke mainly differ from that of Mark in that they contain a large number of sayings of Jesus not given by Mark. Many of these sayings are peculiar to Matthew or peculiar to Luke, but others are given in both, and often with such coincidences of language and of order that they must have been derived from a common source. Thus, for instance, Matthew v.–vii. (the so-called "Sermon on the Mount") is parallel to Luke vi. 20–49, and Matthew xi. 2–19 is practically repeated in Luke vii. 18–35. A comparison of these passages leads us to infer that Matthew and Luke have made use of a common source, written in Greek, which must have contained, amongst other things, sayings of Jesus about John the Baptist, together with a collection of ethical saying which began with the Beatitudes and ended with the similitude of the houses built on the rock or on the river-bed. The common source, now lost, except so far as it is preserved in Matthew and Luke, it was formerly the fashion to call the 'Logia,' from a belief that it was mentioned under that name by Papias of Hierapolis in Asia Minor about the middle of the second century,

"Papias (quoted by Eusebius, Ch. History, III, 39) says: 'Matthew indeed in the Hebrew language wrote down the Logia, and each interpreted them as he was able.' What the work was to which Papias alludes is very doubtful; it is certain that our Gospel according to Matthew is a Greek work, based upon Greek sources, one of them being in fact our Gospel according to Mark."

We will add one more quotation concerning Q:

"The common matter of Matthew and Luke, not shared by Mark, almost all consists of sayings of Jesus. We therefore assume that Q mainly con-
sisted of sayings. But the same arguments that prove Q to have contained the 'Sermon on the Mount,' or at least an earlier form of that collection of sayings, also prove Q to have contained the story of the healing of the centurion's boy. It is because Matthew (v. 3-vii 27) and Luke (vi. 20-49) each contains a collection of sayings, beginning with beatitudes and ending with the similitude of the House on the Rock, that we infer a similar collection to have existed in Q. But this collection is followed, both in Matthew (viii. 3-13) and in Luke (vii. 1-10), by the story of the centurion. If our first inference be valid, then the story of the centurion must also be assigned to Q. Q therefore was not a mere assembly of sayings of Jesus, but also contained anecdotes about his wonderful works."

While the Jesus of Mark is a mysterious personality, an exorcist who has power over demons, the Jesus of Q is a moralist and an inspired teacher. Here is Professor Burkitt's description:

"In any case, the material comprehended under the sign Q includes very many of the most precious jewels of the Gospel. When Justin Martyr in the second century wished to exhibit to the heathen Emperor the characteristic ethical teaching of Christ, nine-tenths of his examples came out of passages derived from Q. It is from Q that we have the blessing on the poor, the hungry, the reviled; from Q come 'Love your enemies,' 'Turn the other cheek,' 'Be like your Father who maketh His sun shine on the evil and the good,' 'Consider the lilies,' 'Be not anxious—your Father knoweth ye have need,' 'They shall come from east and west and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God.' It is Q that tells us that the adversaries of Jesus found him not ascetic enough and mocked at him as a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners. It is Q that tells us that Jesus said 'I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to babes,—even so, Father, for so it was pleasing in thy sight.' If the work of Mark be more important to the historian, it is Q that supplies starting-points for the Christian moralist. Most important of all, it gives light and shade to the somewhat austere lines of the portrait of Jesus sketched in the Gospel of Mark."

The question of the relation between Mark and Q can not yet be regarded as definitely settled. Professor Wellhausen thinks he has proved the priority of Mark, but Harnack is confident of having upset his arguments and declares in favor of the priority at least of many passages of Q. Mark though following an Aramaic original was written in Rome, and abounds in Latinisms, but Q was not only originally written in Aramaic but was also written on the soil of Palestine and its topography was limited to Galilee; but that it should go back to the Apostolic age seems to me more a pious wish than a certainty. It is possible that Clement of Rome knew of Q, but we can not be sure of it. It is strange that Mark did not know it, but for all that we can not doubt that both Mark and the Aramaic Proto-Q have utilized a common source which may have been of an oral nature and had reference to John the Baptist and Christ's baptism by John, etc.
Professor Harnack describes Q in these terms:

“We must accordingly judge that Q began with the preaching of the Baptist, that then there followed the story of the Temptation, then important parts of the so-called Sermon of the Mount, which concluded with the notice: ‘After Jesus had spoken these words he entered into Capernaum,’ and was immediately succeeded by the narrative of the centurion at Capernaum. The subject-matter in question in St. Luke, chaps. iii., iv., vi., vii., is found in its entirety (with the exception of St. Luke vi. 39, 40) in St. Matt., chaps. iii., iv., v, vii, and viii. with very few changes in order . . . .

“The seven narratives comprise the Temptation story (2), the narrative concerning the centurion at Capernaum (13), the question sent by St. John from his prison and the answer of our Lord (14), the story of one who declared himself ready to follow Jesus, and of one who desired first to bury his father (17), the cure of a demoniac and the Beelzebub controversy (29), the demand for a sign, together with our Lord’s command (54). There are thus only two stories of miracles and these miracles of healing in Q . . . .

“It is important that (in 23) the towns Chorazin, Bethsaida, and especially Capernaum, appear as the chief scenes of our Lord’s ministry. An equally important point is the strong emphasis laid upon the significance of St. John the Baptist. The discourse concerning him, which was suggested by his doubting question and which is continued in 15, is preceded by an account of his preaching of a baptism of repentance (1), and is followed by the testimony (50) that with him closes the epoch of the Law and the Prophets. No mention is made of the disciples of our Lord in these stories.

Q includes the following parables and similitudes: the Blind leaders of the blind (9), the Good and corrupt tree (11), the House on the rock and on the sand (12), the Querulous children at play (15), the Sheep and the wolves (19), the Light under the bushel (31), the Thief by night and the Faithful and unfaithful steward (37), Concerning the correct behaviour to the adversary (39), the Leaven and the Mustard seed (40), the Strait gate and the narrow way (41), the Lost sheep (48). Eight of these parables have an individual address without any closer definition—only two refer to the Kingdom of God, one to the present generation (15), and one to the disciples (19). This preponderance of the individual address is noteworthy, and it is also noteworthy that the two parables concerning the Kingdom of God are not eschatological, and are closely connected together. The parables 37, 39 (41) close with an outlook towards the end. Without anticipating a closer critical examination, a cursory glance suffices to inform us that the parables bear the impress of genuineness in a high degree.

“The thirteen collections of sayings (discourses) may be grouped in regard to subject-matter as follows: The discourse of the Baptist, together with the reference to the Coming One (1); the Beatitudes (3); Love for enemies (6); against Judging, mote and beam (8); the Lord’s Prayer and the power of Prayer (27, 28); Fear not, be not anxious, lay not up treasure (34*, 35, 36); The great thanksgiving to the Father (25); The great denunciation


6 Besides these, it is very probable that sections 16 and 18-24 belong to one discourse.
of the scribes and Pharisees (33); Not peace but a sword (38); False Messiahs, the Parousia of the Son of Man (56).—In judging Q it is specially important to note that this source also contains a sermon of the Baptist, and further, that formal teaching concerning the better righteousness, and that exact directions concerning prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, are wanting, although an ethical code is imparted in sections 3, 6, 8, 27, 28, 34, 35, 36. In the discourses concerning our Lord’s relationship to the Father, concerning His attitude towards the scribes and Pharisees and towards the world, and in the discourse concerning the Parousia, the most important relationships ad extra are dealt with, except the relationship to the Baptist, which has been explained in the narrative section 14 (and also beforehand in section 1).

"The twenty-nine shorter or longer sayings are less varied in content, as appears at the first glance; many of them may be regarded with more or less probability as parts of discourses in Q, the restoration of which must however remain problematical; in the case of others, it is possible at once to recognize that they are either related to one another or depend upon the larger groups of sayings. Nine of the sayings in subject-matter, and perhaps also in form, belong to the ethical code—namely, sections 4 (The blow upon the cheek, non-resistance when the coat is taken away), 5 (Give to him that asketh), 7 (The Golden Rule), 32 (The light of the body is the eye), 44 (He that exalteth himself), 49 (No man can serve two masters), 57 (He that findeth his life), 58 (Whosoever hath to him shall be given), 52 (Against divorce).—Fifteen sayings belong together as special directions and promises to the disciples—namely, 10 (The disciple is not above his master), 16 (Proclaim that the Kingdom of God is at hand), 18 (The harvest is great, the labourers few), 19 (I send you forth as sheep), 20, 21 (Conduct the mission from house to house), 22, 23 (The mission in the cities, sayings concerning the Galilean cities), 24 (He that receiveth you receiveth me), 26 (Blessed are your eyes and your ears), 55 (The faith which removes mountains), 45 (He that loveth father or mother), 46 (The bearing of the Cross), 47 (Ye are the salt of the earth), 59 (Ye will sit upon twelve thrones). Of the still remaining sayings, section 50 (The Law and the Prophets until John) connects with the narrative of section 14; the saying concerning Jerusalem (43), as well as the saying that the children of the kingdom would be cast out while the Gentiles would enter in (42), in their purport belong together, and can be connected with the Great Denunciation (33). Quite by themselves stand the sayings concerning the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit (34), concerning offenses (53) and the permanence of the Law (51).

"The first impression that one receives when one surveys the content of Q is twofold. For the most part, the subject-matter seems to fall asunder into disconnected parts, and this impression cannot be quite overcome; but as soon as one calls to mind the etymology of the three gospels and compares Q with it, then Q appears to be undoubtedly more homogeneous than any of the three. What varied material stands in peaceful juxtaposition in St. Matthew and St. Luke, and even in St. Mark! Even if one neglects the stories of the Infancy, what a multitude of varied interests, indeed of discrepancies, cross one another in those gospels! Who would ever have believed that all that St. Matthew or St. Luke or St. Mark narrate stood in one book, if in each case the book itself had not been handed down to us as a single complete whole? Compared with these gospels, the content which we have as-
signed to Q is simply homogeneous. Here a great number of points of view and tendencies which prevail in those gospels are absolutely wanting.

"It is characteristic of St. Mark that he emphasizes the supernatural in our Lord, the Son of God; of St. Matthew, that he treats a great part of the gospel material from the point of view of the primitive community, giving to his whole narrative a Jewish and yet anti-Judaistic tone in the interests of apologetics; and of St. Luke, that with the large-heartedness of a Greek he thrusts those traits, which display Jesus as the Great Healer, into the foreground. But in Q all these tendencies are absent. Here we receive rather the impression that the author is simply concerned with the commandments of our Lord, and aims at giving a description of His message, in which description he appears to be influenced by no special and particular bias. Perhaps we may not be mistaken in supposing that his selection was also determined by his desire to illustrate our Lord's message and His witness to Himself, in their main and characteristic features, by special striking examples. The Messiahship (Divine Sonship) having been established in the introduction, is in the body of the work presupposed as a fact that admits of no further controversy.

"Together with Jerusalem—which is thus never mentioned in Q except in the Woe against the Pharisees—the Passion and all references to the Passion are absent from Q. The single isolated saying concerning the taking up of one's own cross (46) would at the best, if it really stood in Q, only afford an indirect reference to the Passion, and the sign of the prophet Jonah (30), according to the account in Q, had absolutely nothing to do with the Passion. So far therefore as we can judge, all that after the precedent of St. Mark goes to form the main theme of the Synoptic Gospels—the Passion and the narratives and discourses leading up to the Passion—was completely wanting in Q. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the gospels and Q. The latter, in fact, was not a gospel at all in the sense that the Synoptics are. The narrative of this source must therefore have been wanting in historical climax—no thread of historical continuity could have run through it, binding the end to the beginning; for what climax or what thread of continuity could have existed where the Passion, and the thoughts connected with the Passion, were left out of consideration? Thus Q in the main could only have been a compilation of sayings and discourses of varied content."

When we compare the Gospel according to Mark to the fragments which we possess of Q, we are impressed with the superiority of Q as a devotional book. But the very superiority of Q casts the shadow of doubt upon its historical reliability, for it appears to have been a repository of devotional sentences of the age, a kind of anthology garnered from various sources, Jewish as well as Gentile, including the far East. It represents a stage considerably more advanced than Mark and must have had a wider currency among the Christian congregations. It furnished them the best matter for edification which is only equaled, perhaps even excelled, in the later Gospel according to St. John. Justin Martyr quotes with preference passages which belong to Q, and it is not impossible that it was
known to him. It may be the book to which he refers as the "Mémoirs of the Apostles."

Whether or not this theory be true we may be assured that Q was the most popular book among the early Christians down to the time of Justin Martyr and became obsolete only when its main contents had been appropriated by Matthew and Luke. We are therefore confronted with the question how the original of a book of such value and wide circulation could be lost. Professor Harnack explains its disappearance in these words:

"The final blow to the independent existence of Q was dealt when it was incorporated in the gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew. In Luke it exists, split up and dispersed throughout the gospel in subservience to the historical narrative; in St. Matthew it was treated in more conservative spirit, though in some important passages it has suffered more from revision and shows clearer traces of the particular bias of the evangelist. In most skilful fashion—often only by means of an accent or by an arrangement of the context which seems quite insignificant—the first evangelist has made this compilation of discourses subservient to his own special interest in the Christian community and its organization, while St. Luke, who has much more frequently altered the wording of his source, has nevertheless kept so closely to it in essential points that its original character is more clearly perceived in his reproduction."

For the same reason the Gospel of Mark ought to have been lost, and considering its crude character, a man like Professor Burkitt says: "It is not easy to understand how this Gospel came to be preserved at all."

We know that there were many rival documents at the beginning of the Christian era, and we also know that the leaders of the church did their best to remove objectionable literature. Therefore we have good reason to assume that in addition to its preserved passages Q contained some heretical matter, possibly an unorthodox conception of Christ and his resurrection, which made the continuance of the original book undesirable. We know that at first many notions were tolerated because their heretical character was only noticed when the doctrines of the church began to harden into dogmas.

The best authorities in higher criticism disagree on the question whether or not Q contained a story of the passion. At any rate no story of the passion from Q has been preserved. This indicates that if Q really did not contain such an account, it must have presented a Christ-conception which gradually became contradictory to the doctrine of vicarious atonement, and if it contained a story of the
passion, it must have been heretical and at variance with the orthodox view.

It is commonly assumed that the conclusion of Mark was lost for similar reasons. The reports of the resurrected Christ in the Fourth Gospel contradict the reports in the Synoptic Gospels, while Mark seems to have had still another report which clashed with both now preserved. In Q we may have still another story which, however, seems to have affected also the passion of Christ. It is impossible to make a guess that would have any value, but the passion may have been preserved in Q after the fashion of docetism, which was quite common in some quarters of the early Christian church. According to docetic views Christ did not suffer really but only went through the semblance of suffering. This is based on the idea that God was not subject to human frailties. He was assumed to be free from pain as well as sin. Another view quite common in the days of the early church, a trace of which is still preserved in the peculiar reading of Christ’s baptism, consists in a belief that Jesus was purely man until in baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him and he ceased to be the Saviour and an incarnation of God before the passion began, when the Holy Ghost was assumed to have left him. If the passion story in Q was obviously contradictory to the orthodox view it is quite natural that Matthew and Luke should have deemed that portion of their source irregular and selected only that which seemed to be in agreement with their belief as to the nature of Christ.

In order to understand the primitive Christianity of Palestine we must be acquainted with the hopes of the Jewish people of that age, and they are best studied in the terms "Kingdom of God," "Son of Man," and also the significance of the watch-word Maranatha. While in Greece the people were anxious to be assured of the immortality of their souls, the Jews expected the establishment of the Kingdom of God (or the Heavens) on earth. The history of this idea is deposited in the literature of the time in the book of Daniel, the Old Testament Apocrypha and in the Book of Enoch.

The Jews looked upon themselves as the elect people for whose sake God had created the world, but instead of ruling the nations they were trodden under foot and held in contempt. Their prophets comforted them with visions of a brighter future, when the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, would establish his kingdom on earth.

We know that the Nazarenes, whoever they may have been, were filled with expectations of this kind. They were hostile to the Gentile culture which they knew only from distant hearsay, and
they believed that the kingdom was near at hand when their Lord would judge the world and rule the nations with a rod of iron.

The hope for this new order of things found nourishment in old Babylonian traditions of world cycles. The present world would pass away and a new earth and a new heaven would come in its place. Then Israel would take the place to which is was entitled. In this milieu the term "Son of Man" originated, which in Esdras changes off with "Son of Woman" and means originally "man" as the representative of mankind, gradually becoming identified with the man who would establish the Kingdom of God, the Messiah.

The oldest Christian literature is permeated by thoughts of this kind, and the slogan of the primitive church was Maranatha (found in the Didache and the Pauline Epistles) which is now interpreted to mean "the Lord come."

These views are all largely recognized as true even by orthodox theologians, and Professor Burkitt says:

"The church was in a special sense the heir of the Apocalyptists."

"The main idea of the Kingdom of God is found already in the Book of Daniel. The fundamental notion is that the Most High is indeed Autocrat, He alone has sovereignty, but He hands it over for a time and for His own inscrutable purposes to whomsoever He will. At any given moment there is a world-power, the Babylonian, the "Median," the Persian, the Seleucid Greek. But this will not be for ever. In the end the Most High Himself will take the dominion into His own hands. The Kingdom of God Himself will be inaugurated, and He will reign for ever, protecting His faithful people and rewarding them for all the trials they have undergone at the hands of the heathen."

"This is the apocalyptic hope. . . ."

"The Christ or Messiah, that is, the Anointed of God, is one of the features of the coming Kingdom. His function is to judge the heathen and to rule as God's Viceregent over the Saints, when the Great Day arrives. The Christ does not bring in the Kingdom,—that is the work of God Himself; the Christ only enters on his office when all is ready. He is, in fact, one of the personages of the New Age, not the person through whom the New Age is brought in. . . ."

"The date of Enoch is a matter of dispute, and the accepted theory is that it is made up of several parts, of different dates. But it is certainly Palestinian, and it existed in its present form at the beginning of the Christian era. It is quoted by name in the Epistle of Jude, a letter that used to be dated much later than necessary, as long as apocalyptic ideas were out of fashion. It is certainly referred to in the First Epistle of Peter, whatever the date of that work may be; and it was long held in honor among the Christians, who took it for a genuine prophecy of Enoch, 'the seventh from Adam.' But it is especially in the Gospels that we see its influence, in Q as much as in Mark. The theory of demons and demoniacal possession, implied in Luke xi. 24-26 (Matthew xii. 43-45), a passage certainly drawn from Q, is exactly that set forth at length in Enoch; and the judgment scene in Matthew
xxv. 31 ff. ('the Sheep and the Goats') loses half its meaning, if the corresponding scene in Enoch lxii, where 'the Son of Man' is shown 'sitting on the throne of his glory,' be not presupposed. Enoch is crude and fierce, the corresponding words of the Gospel are instinct with spiritual power....

"In Daniel the Man is not individualized. He stands for the nation, not for the Messiah. But in the Similitudes of Enoch, the figure of Daniel, the Son of Man who was the Ancient of Days, is personified and individualized. From of old this Son of Man, this celestial human being, has been hidden with the Most High, but one day he will be revealed. The kings and the mighty, i.e., the heathen rulers of the world, will see and be terrified and beg for mercy in vain. The angels will drag them away to punishment, but the righteous will be saved and protected, and with that Son of Man they will rejoice for ever and ever.

"The Book of Enoch is a strange barbarous work, without poetry, without charm. It has long been rejected from the Bible by every branch of the church save the barbarian Christians of Abyssinia. Are we, it may be asked, really to seek the origin of the title of our Lord, round which so many pathetic associations have grown, in this fierce and narrow Jewish apocalypse? And if this was the hope of the Gospel, was it justified? In what sense can it be said that the Kingdom of God was at hand?

These are fundamental questions for our estimate of Christianity, but they are equally fundamental for the criticism and exegesis of the Gospels. To those who have learned to see the vital principle of the Christian movement in this expectation of the supernatural Kingdom of God, sentence after sentence of the Gospels, saying after saying, parable after parable, falls into its place. And in no document is this clearer than in the Gospel of Mark."

It appears that primitive Christianity did not look much like our present conception of it and so it is natural that the Christ of primitive Christians was different from the Christ of our twentieth century generation. How was this change effected? Professor Burkitt says:

"The New Age came in a form very different from what had been so confidently expected. The little companies of believers did not live to see their Lord appear visibly on the clouds of heaven. Instead of being caught up alive in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, they went one by one to their graves, leaving their successors to carry on the work and the traditions of the Christian Society. Naturally the changed conditions reacted upon Christian theology, upon the Christian view of the Church and of the dispensation in which it found itself."

From this standpoint Professor Burkitt defines the nature of Christianity in these words:

"Christianity is Judaism recreated in a form that could thrive in, and finally absorb, the civilization of Europe."

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Here I will interpose a word in defense of my own views. In the Pleroma I speak of Christianity as "paganism redivivus," and

*Here the reader is warned to bear in mind in this connection what I
I will here illustrate the truth of this proposition by contrasting it with the view of Professor Burkitt who says the opposite and means the same. Primitive Christianity was by no means Christianity in the proper sense of the term, nor did it bear the name; it was Judaism which had absorbed some Gentile notions. In the form in which it was preached by Paul to the Gentiles, it had sloughed off all its Judaism, circumcision and the law of Moses, in spite of Christ's vigorous declaration that "until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law."7

In its further development Christianity dropped its Jewish traditions more and more and absorbed in the same measure the culture of pagan antiquity. This progress is marked by the Gospels thus: first we have Mark, then Matthew, then Luke and finally John who introduces the idea of Christ as the Logos. The history of the church continues in the same line and there is scarcely a century which does not show a change of the Christ ideal in the same direction.

The Christ ideal is elastic and every age has manufactured for its own and special needs its own Christ. Yea, this is true even of every one who believes in a God-man. The Christ of a priest is different from that of a peasant. A professor sees in him the incarnation of truth while to a pious spinster he is all sweetness and love. The Kaiser has another Christ than a cab driver, and we can definitely determine the variations of the Christ type in St. John, in St. Paul, in Thomas Aquinas, in Anselm, in Bernard of Clairvaux, in Pope Leo XII and in Pope Pius X. Since the nature of the Christ type depends upon our wants and idiosyncrasies there is no way of deciding which is the right one.

The question as to Jesus is different. Whether or not there was a Jesus is a matter of evidence or perhaps probability; and if he existed, what beliefs he held, what motives stirred him, what he did and intended to do, are historical problems which within the limits of our material on hand can be solved, at least approximately.

understand by paganism which prepared Christianity in so far as it believed in a hero, the God-man, the saviour. Born of a human mother, he is the son of a god, and he devotes his life to the welfare of mankind. Finally he is slain by his enemies, but rises from death to new life. For further details see the Pleroma, pp. 20-24 and passim. See also the Story of Samson, pp. 137 ff.

7 We purposely omit the clause, "till all be fulfilled." On a former occasion we have called attention to the double clause: either the law shall not perish until heaven and earth shall pass away, or until all shall be fulfilled. The clauses contradict one another. We notice also that in the reconstruction of Q, both Wellhausen and Harnack omit the former clause.
Critics agree, as stated above, that both Mark and Q are ultimately derived from Palestine. They are independent of each other but they have utilized common tradition, presumably oral. The question now is which of the two is of greater historical value, and it seems to me that even if we grant Q to be older than Mark we cannot attribute to it the same historical value. It contains no biographical data and pictures Jesus as an ideal ethical teacher. He has lost the marked characteristics of a definite human personality and has assumed the vagueness of the later Christ type. This lack of personality, of definite individual features, is a great advantage for practical purposes, because this vague Christ type lends itself more easily to idealization and will better suit many different and often contradictory purposes.

The Jesus of Mark is not so accommodative. He is a rugged and almost bizarre figure, viewed through the magnifying glass of deification which only serves to make him more grotesque if measured by the needs of a broader and more humanitarian age. Unless we have to give up the historical Jesus permanently, as Prof. William Benjamin Smith has done, we find in spite of the deification in Mark’s Jesus a more realistic personality than in the noble and more spiritual generalization—the Jesus of Q.

It is a pity that neither Wellhausen, nor Harnack, nor Professor Burkitt, nor any other theologian of repute who has done work in New Testament criticism, is familiar with the Buddhist canon, for the time has come when the problem of the coincidences between the traditions of Buddhism and Christianity clamors for a solution. It is strange that a Persian historian of the fifteenth century, Mirkhond, describes the birth of Christ in the same way as the Buddhist canon describes the birth of Buddha.

There are the parables of the talents, of the blind leaders of the blind, of the prodigal son; there are the stories of Christ’s nativity and the slaughter of the Innocents; further the tale of the widow’s two mites, of Christ and Peter walking on the water, the beatitudes, and other coincidences with Buddhist scriptures, such as the reference to the mustard seed, a stray mention of the wheel of becoming9 in the epistle of James, the idea of abiding treasures, detail similarities in the temptation story, etc.

9 τρόχος γενέσεως. The Wheel of Becoming is translated in the Vulgate rota nativitatis and in the English authorized version “course of nature.” For details of this trace of Buddhism in the New Testament see the author’s book on The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil, pages 118 to 127 ff., where the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming is reproduced from several Buddhist pictures.
These parallels between Buddhism and Christianity agree too closely and are too numerous to be purely accidental, and it is remarkable that Q is full of them. Further we will call attention to the discovery made by Mr. Albert J. Edmunds that the Buddhist canon is quoted twice in the Fourth Gospel. One quotation in John viii. 38 is introduced by the words "as the Scripture hath said," and another in xii. 34, "We have heard out of the law." Neither can anywhere be found in the Old Testament, but both are contained in the Buddhist canon, the former in the Patisamhida-maggo, the latter in the Maha-Parinibbana sutta. ⁹

Echoes of Buddhist thought had reached Hither Asia before or at the time of Christ. They left definite traces but they were too dim to constitute an independent religion. They only influenced the religious aspirations of the people and were assimilated to Western traditions. The oldest traces of Indian influence are perhaps Aesop's Fables. Further we can trace the history of the life of Buddha through all its stages and changes, until Buddha became a Roman Catholic saint under the name St. Josaphat. We can not doubt that some Buddhist parables entered into the fabric of the homiletics of Christianity at the very beginning of its career. We deem it not proven, but it is not improbable that Jesus himself made use of some of these striking similes.

Here the reader is referred to the theory set forth in The Pleroma that a religious fermentation had set in after Alexander's conquest of the Orient, which caused a mingling of the different religious creeds, and resulted in an historical movement comprising all those tendencies of the gnostics which in their further development later on after the establishment of the Catholic Church were condemned as heretical. In its origin the Gnostic movement antedates Christianity.

Because of the great influence it exercised on the growth of Christianity one of the most important sects of this kind is the Zabian, the great representative of which in Palestine was John the Baptist. This sect, called in Greek the Baptistizers, also the Disciples, the Disciples of St. John, or the Brethren, was not limited

⁹ In John vii, 38, Christ says: "He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"; and this curious prophecy quoted from "the Scriptures" is found literally in the Buddhist canon. The same is true of the passage that the Christ abideth forever, or literally, according to the Greek, for the æon. This strange expression is better understood when read in its original context in the Maha-parinibbana Suttanta, the Book of the Great Decease, that if the Tathagata choose he could stay longer on earth, for "The Tathagata could remain for the æon." See Edmunds, Buddhist Texts in John, Philadelphia, 1906; and also his larger work Buddhist and Christian Gospels, Philadelphia, 1908.
to Palestine, and we have good reason to assume that the main impulse for its foundation came from foreign countries, especially from Persia. The leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes, held aloof, and they were vigorously denounced by John the Baptist as a "generation of vipers." On the other hand it is noteworthy that the Zabians found adherents among the outcast classes of the people (Matt. xxi. 32; Luke vii. 29-30).

That Jesus proceeded from this movement is the most definite statement of the New Testament, though we grant that this could be upset on the theory that the passages on John the Baptist were written in order to gain the support of the Zabians. From the reports in the Acts of the Apostles it is apparent that Paul was well received in their circles; he gained his first converts from the disciples of John the Baptist, and the difference seems to have been regarded at that time as inconsiderable. It is stated that their baptism was that of John and not in the name of Jesus, and in another passage the difference was reduced to the notion that they had not yet received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.

We will not enter here into a discussion of the nature of kindred sects such as the Nazarenes, Ebionites and Essenes, and whether or not they were different names of the same movement. Certain it is they were similar and originated under the influence of kindred aspirations.

Considering the foreign influence which showed itself in Zabianism and other sects, we must assume that echoes from the Far East played an important part, although we can not doubt that the Semitic world-conception formed the bottom rock. The expectation of an approaching world-catastrophe may be traced back to Babylonian sources, but it was overlaid by the religious notions of the Persians so similar in many details to later Christianity, and upon this again we find a layer of Indian traditions among which Buddhist doctrines may have constituted a significant portion.

Though the intermediate links of this development are no longer accessible, we can be sure that in this way the Nazarene movement shaped itself as a parallel formation to similar religious movements in the world of the Gentiles. When this Palestinian gnosticism made a missionary propaganda in the Hellenistic world under the Apostle Paul, it found the soil prepared. Similar ideas prevailed everywhere but Paul offered them in a systematic form, and was backed by the formidable array of Hebrew literature so mysterious to the Greeks and so venerable by age and the mode of its tradition. The concreteness with which St. Paul endowed the hazy gnostic notions
prevalent throughout the empire, the systematic unity which he gave them, the humaneness of the Christ as a historical figure, the plausibility of his proposition that it was a premeditated plan of God to prepare mankind for universal religion through the people of Israel—all these and some additional reasons secured the victory for Christianity in its competition with other Gentile gnostic movements.

It will be of interest to see how an orthodox scholar like Professor Burkitt adjusts his relation to the results of his studies. The Jesus of Mark is not what Professor Burkitt would naturally have wished him to be, yet the evidence before him compels him to accept Mark as historically most authentic. He feels inclined to believe that it was written by the nameless "certain young man" mentioned in Mark xiv. 51, who with his immature mind left us this document as a picture of Jesus as he saw him, and so, says Professor Burkitt (p. 57), "The office of Mark is rather to be a witness of what men saw and heard." As to what appears to us the narrowness of the Jesus in Mark, his exclusiveness as a Jew, and the limitation of his vision, Professor Burkitt makes the following comment:

"The first necessity is to place him [Jesus] in due relation to the strange and far-off time in which he lived among men. The first thing we have to account for is the enthusiasm and the devotion of those who claimed to be his followers and apostles. 'Let the children first be filled'; we must first of all think of our Lord in connection with the aspirations of his own time and his own country, and be ourselves content with the crumbs that have fallen down into our very different world. After all, the table was spread for the lost sheep of the House of Israel, not for us."

It is a serious drawback for this explanation that the hopes of the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" were so little fulfilled, and if the table was spread for them while the Gentiles received the crumbs, it almost appears that Jesus gave them a stone when they asked for bread. The "kingdom of heaven" as it was understood by them ended in utter desolation.

Professor Burkitt's view will recommend itself to those Christians who are anxious to preserve their ideal conception of Jesus as the Christ, yet even if the high conception of the historical Jesus has to be surrendered Christianity retains its Christ ideal which remains serviceable whether or not the historical Jesus was worthy of being worshiped as the incarnation of God. Christianity is not without good reasons named after Christ instead of after Jesus.

We will grant that those Christians who are accustomed to the
traditional conception of Christianity will find it hard to surrender their belief in the historical Jesus as an example for imitation, and this will apply mainly to Unitarians and kindred liberals who have discarded the Christ in the hope of preserving the ideal of a high-minded, gentle and noble Jesus. It will take them some time to become accustomed to the other view that the Christ ideal is more important than the historical Jesus, that the latter can go if the former remains, and that an ideal is not an empty non-existence, but a superpersonal presence which is of a more significant reality than any actual person of bone and flesh.