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THE SPIRITUAL CHRIST

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ONE of the main results of the modern critical view of the New Testament, one that was probably entirely unforeseen in the earlier days of criticism but is now becoming perfectly clear, is this: The New Testament alone, and taken by itself, provides neither an adequate historical explanation of the rise of Christianity nor even a thoroughly satisfactory narrative of its origins. The Christian faith began as faith in a Risen, Exalted Lord: Jesus the Messiah, risen from the dead and about to inaugurate the Kingdom of God 'with power'. Its documents—or those, at any rate, that have survived—are the scanty records of an enthusiastic Messianic sect, of a group far more interested in the future and the present than in the past. They are the documents of a religious movement, rather than the annals of a school or the chronicles of a political organization. Like the sacred early records of many other religious groups, chiefly oriental, they are fragmentary and incomplete; and they derive their real meaning and value from the spiritual movement they so partially and inadequately reflect—a movement which is accurately known to us only in a somewhat later form, after it has fully emerged above the horizon of history.

I

It used to be thought, by some, that when all the later 'accretions' to the Gospel had been stripped off, and we really got 'back to Jesus' himself and his genuine teaching, we should have

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discovered the central dynamic of Christianity—a body of ethical teaching, perhaps, or a set of doctrines relating the individual simply and humbly to his Father and Maker; that out of this inspiring body of teaching grew in time the whole system of dogma, polity, and worship known to history as the Catholic Church and its faith; and that all along, through the centuries, this was the vitalizing center of Christian thought and devotion—more adequately recognized in Protestantism than in Catholicism, but no less truly the indispensable norm of the latter than of the former.

I will leave at one side the question whether or not this is a sound interpretation of either historical Protestantism or historical Catholicism—though to me it appears a hopeless reading back of modern Liberalism into such earlier centuries as the Sixteenth and the Thirteenth; I will simply point out that from the critical point of view it is now next to impossible to ‘strip off all accretions’ and have anything left. The gospel tradition, during the oral period, was so thoroughly fluid that the original element and the ‘accretions’ are now all but inseparable. As in geological research, stratification is observable down to the Archean level; below that, fluidity has obliterated the traces of succession—heat, pressure, renewed upthrusts of molten magma, the once chilled and solid rock having been repeatedly re-melted and forced into new positions; all this has so completely disarranged the geological record that only hypothesis can supply the desired account of earthly origins. In the Gospels we find the remains of certain documents: Q, L, the Pre-Markan Roman and Palestinian Tradition, and so on; or, if we are forbidden to refer to documents, at least we find evidence of various strata or cycles of earlier oral material. But who will suppose that any one of these documents—or cycles—gives us a final and infallible account of Jesus’ life or teaching, without ‘accretion’ in the course of its oral transmission? Only hypothesis will enable us to single out the elements within this early traditional material which go back without question to Jesus himself. And such hypothetical reconstruction of origins is of course a highly hazardous procedure. For as a matter of fact, the tradition all goes ‘back to Jesus’ in one form or other: it received its initial

impulse from him, or from those fairly closely associated with him; it reflects the interpretations of him and of his teaching, his character and purposes, which were set forth more or less consciously and more or less coherently by the earliest groups of his followers and, probably, by certain outstanding 'teachers' in the early church. Some of these we know by name—but little more than by name; others we do not know even by name. Evidently Peter was a primary witness and interpreter, probably also we should add James and John 'who seemed to be pillars'; no doubt also Philip, and others to whom the author of Luke-Acts refers; but no doubt likewise many another, not even mentioned in the Gospels, the Epistles, or the Book of Acts. Yet what difference does it make, whether we know their names or not, since their respective contributions to the common tradition are no longer identifiable?

The fact is, as the Form Critics point out clearly, the whole body of oral tradition in the pre-literary period and before any 'documents' were written down was still fluid; under such conditions, it is practically impossible, save in the broadest and most general way, to distinguish purely original elements from 'accretions' added during, say, the first ten or twenty years.¹ What we have before us in our Christian Sacred Book is a collection, or a series of collections, of surviving traditions come down from its classical epoch, the first two or three generations of the new faith. In a way, every single tradition has something to tell us of the Founder, of his teaching, character, or influence; as has also the tradition taken as a whole. But it is no longer thought possible to distinguish infallibly and set apart without residue the 'Galilean Gospel'—the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus of Nazareth—without reference to his words as reported by the earliest 'eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word.' 'Christianity Accord-

¹ For an exposition of this new school of criticism I may refer to my *Form Criticism: A New Method of New Testament Research* (Chicago, 1934), which contains translations of the works of Professors Rudolf Bultmann ('The Study of the Synoptic Gospels') and Karl Kundsinn ('Primitive Christianity in the Light of Gospel Research').

ing to Christ' cannot be distinguished, at least not by these methods, from that 'According to Mark' or 'According to Q', or according to the Church's earliest teachers in Jerusalem or Antioch or Caesarea or Joppa or Samaria or Damascus or Rome.

II

It has also been assumed, on the other hand, that if not an ethical gospel—strikingly like that presupposed in Harnack's *What is Christianity?*—then probably the primitive Messianic faith enshrined in the earliest records can be referred back without question to Jesus: i.e. more or less in all its forms, whether found in Mark or Q, or in the Little Apocalypse (embedded in Mark xiii), or in the material peculiar to the Gospel of Matthew. This was Schweitzer's idea, in its extremest form; and under modification it has influenced much of the New Testament scholarship of the Twentieth century, thus far. But a similar difficulty confronts us here to that which affects the identification of his ethical teaching: it is impossible to be wholly sure which elements are original and which are later accretions, made during the period of oral transmission. It may be thought that the eschatology of the Gospels is more readily classifiable by sources than the ethical or non-eschatological teaching: the high, apocalyptic eschatology of Matthew is very different from that of Q, for example; in this diversity it stands out in strong contrast to Jesus' ethical teaching, which, as represented in the Gospels, apparently forms a unity, clear and distinct and, as a rule, self-authenticated: unique and original and therefore unquestionably Jesus' own. But the impression results only from the larger amount of attention that has been paid, by most recent writers, to the eschatological than to the ethical teaching contained in the Gospels. It is a real question if the ethical teaching is any more a unity than the eschatological, judging from what we find recorded in the earliest sources. It is equally a problem, then, to place our finger upon one particular group of eschatological sayings as representing the original and dynamic element in the Gospel, and to do the same for any one group of ethical sayings. What we have, in 'the eschatology of the Gospels', is

an amalgam, a synthesis, a formulation of an apocalyptic hope of the Kingdom and the Messiah, inspired no doubt by Jesus, and preserving no doubt many of his sayings, but combined with and expressed in terms of that hope as held by the first generation or two of his followers. Here again the proposal to distinguish between the original teaching of the Lord and later oral 'accretions' is one almost impossible to carry out in detail, and in any but the most general terms.

The boldest and most logical attempt to do so is still that of William Wrede, whose *Messianic Secret in the Gospels* is even now, thirty years later, a book worth reading and pondering, and one not yet satisfactorily answered by the 'thorough-going eschatologists'. In brief, the argument runs: We recognize and can trace the process of 'heightening' the apocalyptic-eschatological element in the Gospels: the contrast between Mark and Matthew is obvious at once. Well then, let us project that line backwards, and see what angle it forms at the base! It is not difficult to see that the theory of a Messianic Secret—i.e. of Jesus' secret Messiahship—has been intruded into the Marcan tradition: the tradition of Mark, as also that of Q, can be understood (and better understood, Wrede insists) without reference to the theory. It is not improbable, therefore, that the whole idea of Jesus' Messiahship, i.e. of his self-identification with the 'Son of Man' Messiah whose coming he predicted, is an intrusion into the Gospel tradition. It is an element later than Jesus' own teaching. It was derived explicitly, so some of the texts imply, from the conviction that he had risen from the dead and 'entered into his glory' as the predestined Messiah: his resurrection certainly meant, for his earliest followers, not mere resuscitation from death, but exaltation, triumph, 'glorification at God's right hand'. Mark undertakes to prove that Jesus was already Messiah, even during his earthly life and ministry, and did not have to wait for the Resurrection to 'manifest his glory' (as the strongly Marcan, though later, Gospel of John words it). But the undertaking lands Mark in insoluble difficulties—difficulties chiefly with his own tradition of Jesus' words and deeds; difficulties which he solves by his twin theories of Jesus' secret Messiahship, and of the blunders and 'hardening' of the Jewish

people (the result of a divine 'judgment' which had overtaken them). Thus it is no mere *Deus ex machina* which has to be invoked at the end of the drama; divine interposition is required in every act and at every step of the obscure and involved way, as Mark has chosen to follow its *denouement*.

But, it is easy to point out, there is no trace of a 'Messianic Secret' in Q, or in L: i.e. in the non-Markan, non-Matthean elements in the Gospel tradition. This of course strengthens Wrede's argument, so far as it refers to Mark. But it likewise leaves us in the midst of difficulties—difficulties not to be solved by appeal, say, to Wellhausen's relative dating of Mark and Q, as if Q took over the results of the theory minus the theory itself, i.e. the fact of Jesus' Messiahship without the theory of any secret about it. No; all our sources assume, in one form or other, that Jesus was Messiah; and imply, in one form or other, that he referred to himself and consistently thought of himself as Messiah. At least, the simplest interpretation of his sayings is to assume this self-identification. The question is, therefore, this: Is the belief in Jesus' Messiahship a later 'accretion' to the pristine Gospel; or is it a primary element, one that was there from the first? Is it kernel, or one more layer of shell? If we strip it off, have we laid bare what Jesus himself thought and taught; or have we removed a vital element of his own gospel, without which the remainder is incomplete, and in some degree meaningless?

III

Now even those who most strongly insist that the 'Messianic Consciousness' of Jesus was the very heart of his gospel must admit that this was not the whole of it. There is still the ethical, the general religious element—much of it far more original and unique than much of the eschatological element. Hence we get such a theory as that of Johannes Weiss and Easton, viz. that there were two foci in Jesus' teaching, an ethical and an eschatological, with a divine Sonship and a Jewish Messiahship; an eternal outlook coupled with a temporal-historical, one might almost say. It is no use dismissing such a theory as a survival

of orthodox Christology, or as a bold attempt to cut the Gordian knot; for the data upon which it is based, and which it is designed to explain, are everyone's problem—and if this particular explanation will not work some other must be devised that will. These data, we repeat, are those which were provided in the tradition prior to the composition of the Gospels; what we have is not Jesus' own words, readily distinguishable from those added by his followers, but Jesus' words as reported, interpreted, selected by his followers, and reported oft-times in their own language and with the subtle emphases and nuances of meaning that reporting at second and third hand inevitably gives to all human utterance. Whether or not we project the line—a tangent, some will say—as far as Wrede did, it is inescapable to project it some distance; for it is impossible to suppose that the influences and interests that affected the gospel tradition between 70 A.D. and 90 or 100 or 110 A.D. were entirely new, and had been wholly ineffective during the earlier period, say from 30 A.D. to 70.

Furthermore, if once we contrast the eschatology of Mark with that of Q or L, the way is open for still other contrasts. The Messianic outlook of certain passages (in Q, L, and Mark) is quite distinguishable from that of other passages, even in the same documents (or cycles of tradition). Indeed, in some passages and groups of passages the Messianic element varies down almost to zero: Jesus is far more a prophet, or a Wisdom teacher, or an ascetic, or a rabbi, or the mystical Suffering Servant of the Lord, than Messiah of the popular hope—however variously that figure be conceived. It is quite impossible that the idea of 'Messiah' covered and included all these diverse characters: so much so that exegetes have been forced to assume that in taking over the traditional Jewish conception Jesus entirely transformed it, with the result that 'Christ,' on Christian lips, is no longer the exact equivalent of Jewish 'Messiah'; and if on Christian lips, then also on the lips of Jesus himself. From whom else would the meaning have been learned?—But is it so certain that all these meanings could be read into the Jewish concept of Messiahship, let alone read out of and derived from it? Is it likely that this one term would be singled out of all those available at the time, and made the vehicle of Jesus' own self-descrip-

tion? Bousset thought so: 'It was the only possible term for him to use, yet an inadequate one; while it gave him an inner grasp of himself, at the same time it led him into insoluble outward difficulties; and it was one which he bore as a burden upon his spirit almost to the end of his life.'² But Bousset's idea is too Marcan, as is his whole conception of the life and character of Jesus. It is not the idea one would gather from Q or L—from Proto-Luke, let us say, in Streeter's reconstruction. Where is the sunny joyousness, the freedom and confidence of the Beloved Son of the Father, which shines from the non-Marcan portrait of Jesus—and even from some bits of the Marcan?

What confronts us, in the end, is not a choice between one or other of these Gospel portraits as infallible and authentic, which must be taken as standard, and all others discarded. We are faced with variety—as in the likenesses of Lincoln and Washington, for example; one may be better than the others, but all tell us something—even the least adequate tell us what the author tried to convey, the meaning of Jesus' life and teaching as he understood it. Hence none is to be discarded as useless or perverse (at least until we come to the apocryphal and legendary gospels of later centuries). How then are we to choose? Again we must insist, the answer must be by hypothesis. Which of the portraits best accounts for the total result? Which comes nearest to picturing the one who is required to explain the origin of Christianity as a Jewish sect—'the New Israel'—growing practically from the first into a world-religion, with a gospel for all mankind?

From the first, let it be noted, Messianism was not the one sole and exclusive formula used in the expression and interpretation of the Gospel; if it was the dominant one, it at the same time acquired features either not much emphasized or not present at all in earlier apocalypticism. Jesus was not simply 'Messiah,' but 'Lord'—practically from the beginning of the Christian movement; and 'Servant of the Lord,' a term derived from II Isaiah and used to explain his death and resurrection—a feature simply not contemplated as even possible in earlier

² Cf. his *Jesus*, Tübingen 1907, pp. 82ff.

Messianism. It was not simply 'Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth in Galilee' whose followers assembled in an upper room in Jerusalem, after his death; nor was it, on the other hand, merely a band of hope that had gathered to await his coming in glory on the clouds of heaven. The fact is, here was something new, in human history and in their own experience; and the language they used in describing that experience, and in describing him, was only the least inadequate they could discover or invent. If he was Messiah, and that was the term chiefly used, he was certainly *more* than Messiah, as hitherto conceived; or he was Messiah in a new divine sense, with a new meaning, not to be gathered wholly from either the ancient oracles or from popular expectation. And as the Church spread among Gentiles, who spoke Greek now as their mother tongue, other terms came into use: Saviour, Son of God, Logos, God Incarnate. Yet none of these terms exhaustively defined him, or more than gave a rough general indication of his true nature. Even the later creeds, as we now recognize, were not so much metaphysical definitions as attempts to reject and rule out metaphysical misinterpretations which did not tally with Scripture or with Christian experience.

IV

What we have in the Gospels, then, and in the New Testament as a whole, is not the early records of a Messianic sect, pure and simple; nor the surviving teachings of a great ethical teacher, or of the movement of his followers, pure and simple; but the literary deposit left by a mighty stream of spiritual life flowing through two or three generations of human society, at first with torrential velocity down the rocky hillsides of Palestine, and then at slower speed but with gathering volume, out upon the broad plains of the Graeco-Roman world. This stream was both Messianic and ethical,³ and was neither exclusively one nor the

³ Cf. Harnack, *Dogmengeschichte* (4th ed.) i, 65: 'The Christian movement from its beginnings until about the middle of the third century was equally as strongly and consciously an *ethical* movement as it was a religious. The basic urge of the Gospel, in other words, continued up to this time. Afterwards the ethical and the cultic-sacramental elements changed places.'

other; nor is it exhaustively described as an ethical type of Messianism, or as a Messianic type of ethical philosophy; for it was much more than is embraced either by one term or the other, or by both taken together. It was something essentially *new*, which older terms, or even perennial, conventional human terms and categories, were—and still are—inadequate to embrace or to convey. Hence the New Testament taken by itself, as we said at the outset, is unable to provide either a satisfactory account of the historical origins of this movement (largely by reason of its later date and fragmentary nature), or an adequate historical explanation of them. There is something more to Christianity than the New Testament makes clear: what that is must be sought in the movement itself, of which the New Testament is its fragmentary record.

Were we to inquire of almost any Christian in the first century, his answer would have been one of those we have already discussed, or something similar. But behind and within all the answers, the truth to which they all point, would be *the reality of the Spiritual Christ*. Paul was the clearest witness to this faith: but he was far from the only one. Messianists would have admitted it; Alexandrian exegetes, like Apollos; converted scribes, like the author of Matthew; Hellenists, like those in Antioch and Damascus, and from an early date even in Jerusalem; Christian prophets, like the author of Revelation; Wisdom writers, like James; martyrs, like the authors of Mark and I Peter; Old Testament Christians, like the author of Hebrews; historians, like the author of Luke-Acts: this is the one unifying principle in all the 'theologies' and theories of the New Testament writers. And none of them set it forth adequately (Paul perhaps the least inadequately), though it is the presupposition of all their exposition, admonition, exhortation, narration and devotion. That is, the historical teaching of Christ was not the whole of 'the Gospel'; nor was the narrative of his life and death and resurrection; nor the hope of his return 'in glory'; these were the external, historically or geographically conditioned expressions of his life and teaching; some of them men might even forget, or fail ever to learn; but the great *fact* behind them all, and behind the whole Christian movement, indeed behind the

world-order, now that 'the fulness of the times' had come, and the meaning of history and of human life had at last been made clear—the great new fact was that out from the eternal had come a Voice, a human life, a moving Spirit, and the whole world was changing perceptibly as a result. God had at last 'taken His great power,' and was about to 'reign.' God had sent His Son, in the fulness of time, to call sinners, and to die and rise again—not as a man, merely, not even as Messiah (for Messiah was always, after all, a name for the coming King of one nation, the Jews), but as the manifestation, in some sense, of God Himself. It might be that Christ and the Spirit were distinct—so they were usually conceived, though in closest relation; yet Paul had written, 'The Lord is the Spirit.' At any rate, the essential thing in the whole spiritual-social movement of early Christianity was an invisible change, which had taken place—or was still taking place—out in the eternal invisible world, something initiated by God, not by man, not even by Christ; whose effects were visible in a measure here and now, but were to be even more visible, even palpable and tangible, before long.

Thus Christianity was more than Messianism, and more than an ethical movement, more even than a 'religious revival'; it was the new spring-tide of the Spirit; the critical turning-point had been reached in the history of mankind and of the whole universe; the Church was the organ and the scene of all kinds of new fresh 'powers of the age to come'; and throned above, yet within, his Church dwelt Christ, the Spiritual Lord of this new life. What we come upon, then, in tracing back the history of Christian origins, is not an ethical society, nor a band of fanatical Messianists, but a group of men gathered to worship, in communion with a risen, glorified, but ever-present Lord, 'breaking bread from house to house' and 'continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and in prayers.' We do not look down a well and behold the reflection of our own faces—as Modernists and Liberals have often been charged with doing: we look back and see the beginnings of a movement primarily religious, centered in worship, prayer, and other activities of the religious life, mystical, enthusiastic, deeply moved by motives not wholly of this world,

and inspiring men to new hopes, new faith, and a whole new set of values of which love for God and man was easily first and chief. It is the Spiritual Christ, not the historical—if a distinction must be made—who is the Founder and the real source of the religion known as Christianity.

V

The bearing of this principle upon the religious situation of today, with its manifold problems, historical and other, is obvious at once. Nevertheless I am not setting it forth here in the interest of solving modern religious perplexities or problems of faith; but because I am convinced the only possible way we are ever to understand the origins of Christianity is by a thorough application of this principle. Scholars are sometimes warned not to permit pure biblical science to become contaminated with theological or dogmatic considerations; and I personally subscribe to that view of our task. Yet I am sure that we equally need to be encouraged to recognize the rights of constructive thought, if we are ever to get anywhere in the study of history and pass on from a consideration of the minutiae of exegesis, texts, and dates, to a full-range, clear-focussed picture of the past, and 'see life steadily and see it whole.' One thing we must never forget, whether our field of interest be primarily the Hebrew or the Christian Sacred Writings: all Biblical research has to do with the origins of two closely related and still vital religions, Judaism and Christianity. Apart from their *religious* significance, these writings possess but the barest antiquarian or archeological interest—they fill certain lacunae in ancient Near Eastern social history, and in a measure political history as well; but that is all; and even their social and political significance cannot be clearly made out without reference to the religious ideas, hopes, aspirations, or despairs which they enshrine. We had better be continually prepared, therefore, to take a wide view rather than a narrow, to maintain a broad and sympathetic rather than a partisan and sectarian outlook upon the varied and multifarious manifestations of the religious life, and of the spiritual Reality that lies behind and inspires them. For in a very real sense it is

just as true of a twentieth century scholar as it was of an early Christian in Corinth, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more.' The Spiritual Christ, the Lord of the Church's Faith, is simply indispensable, if we are to have a genuinely historical interpretation of Christian origins, and see how the Christian religion actually arose in the first century, and view its surviving earliest literature in proper historical perspective.

In brief, some of the clearest and most 'characteristic' sayings of Jesus, some which most expressly set forth the very quintessence of 'the Gospel,' are all but certainly additions or 'accretions' to the tradition. Such are, e. g., the saying in Mark 10⁴⁵, 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, . . .'; the Great Invitation, 'Come unto me . . .' (from Q), which Dr. Sanday once described as the very heart of the Gospel; the Lucan word from the cross, 'Father, forgive them . . .' Now if in the Gospels we are dealing only with great literature—we are dealing with great literature, on a par, in many respects, with Shakespeare and Aeschylus and Plato; but were it only great literature, and no more, this situation would be one thing, and easily settled. We should say at once, "This springs from the creative imagination of religious writers who rank as geniuses in the interpretation of the highest and noblest motives men can attribute to their heroes, or even to God himself. If God were to become man, this is how he would act, this is how he would speak." But the Gospels are not just great literature; they are based upon, and record, a historical tradition. How are we to account for such sayings, enshrined in a tradition which nevertheless itself suggests a process of transformation, of enlargement, of accretion? The sayings are clearly 'in character'; and yet there is a subtle difference, often intimated by the setting, or by echoes of other sayings not quite so clear, so explicit, so obviously reflective of the outlook of the early Church.

I know no way to answer this question short of a frank recognition that the *Spirit* of Jesus, living on in the Church, was one with the historical Jesus, and was a genuinely creative force in the thought of men long after. If an early Christian prophet or

teacher claimed to speak 'a word of the Lord,' if an early Christian apostle claimed (not as an individual), 'We have the mind of Christ,' I see no antecedent objection to taking the claim in simple earnest. We are studying a literature that sprang out of a fresh, creative, religious experience; and we cannot begin by refusing, on grounds of philosophy or psychology, to grant the first premise of our writers, viz. the absolute reality of the Person 'whom not having seen' they nevertheless knew, worshipped, obeyed, and lived in continual communion with. Far from psychology's doing away with such a premise, the experiential data upon which it is based, and in whose records it is inseparably involved, are themselves the most important material with which the psychology of religion has to deal. How the modern student will himself view them, in the end, is no doubt a matter of personal acceptance or rejection—a matter of private faith or disbelief; but, we must insist, the literature of primitive Christianity is to be understood, if at all, only in the light of that religion's basic assumption, not only of the possibility of communications from the risen Lord, but of the complete actuality, the absolute reality, of the Spiritual Christ. No early Christian would admit that a saying attributed to Jesus but received 'through the Spirit' had any less claim to historical truth and to full authenticity than a saying reported as uttered in Capernaum or Jerusalem during his earthly ministry.⁴ This is a fact we must bear con-

⁴ Compare Wellhausen, *Einleitung*, p. 77. He points out that a saying found in one source may be quite as authentic as one reported in two or three, and continues: "The spirit of Jesus lived on in the primitive community, and not only created the Gospel *about* Jesus but also developed still further his ethical teaching. This of course took place upon the foundation which he had already laid. The ethics of the community was in truth the work of Jesus; in it his spirit was expressed; and it has a perfect right to be set on a par with what he would in fact have actually taught in a similar situation. At the same time of course we must weigh carefully the literary testimony when we are attempting to judge the authenticity of Jesus' actual words—at least generally speaking, though there are some exceptions."

Compare also p. 103f.: "The heavenly Messiah overshadowed the earthly Jesus, though not with the result that the work of the latter was brought to an end . . . Apart from his continued work in the community (*Nachwirkung*)

stantly in mind as we read the Gospels today. Form Criticism sets the issue before us, inescapably. But it also suggests that the primitive answer to our question may also very likely be the true and final one: the Spiritual Christ is no figure of speech, no beautiful symbol for the surviving influence of a great prophet, but a genuinely real Person. If modern philosophy and psychology have not merely come to terms with human experience, but are now inclined to make it their point of departure, perhaps it is time for biblical criticism to reach the same point of view and adopt a similar method.

in der Gemeinde) we can form no conception of the religious personality of Jesus."

What Wellhausen so truly and beautifully says is not, however, quite what an early Christian would have said—or at least most of those whose beliefs and activities are reflected in the New Testament. It was not the surviving influence of a great Teacher, but the actual spiritual presence of a divine Lord, somehow identical with the historical Jesus, which accounted for the production of some at least by the sayings in the Gospels.