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(2s. net). Dr. Clarke first traces the customs of the Jews, the early Christians, and the successive generations of church people till the present. He then, in his second part, deals with the subject in its own nature and claims: the present situation, earning and spending, motives, competing claims, wills and endowments, a plea for simplicity, clerical problems. He adds some suggestive outlines for sermons on the subject. The book is, for its size, very thorough, and there is a mixture of shrewd sense and spirituality which is attractive. Clergymen will be interested to learn that 'Priests are not at liberty to marry merely for "love," irrespective of whether the woman will make a good clergyman's wife.' Even here there is a characteristically sensible point.

There is to be a Conference of the Churches at Oxford in 1937, and an International Christian Youth Conference will meet in 1939. In preparation for these Conferences, Mr. H. W. Fox, Hon. Secretary of the British Council of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, has prepared two books. One, already published, was called 'Loyalties to Church and State.' The second one has just appeared, *The Kingship of Christ*, in Education, History, Economics and International Relations. The object of the Conferences is to state the Christian values in view of attacks made upon them to-day by Communism, Paganism, and Materialism. And it is of grave importance that Christian people should rightly understand the issues, and the claims of such issues. Mr. Fox has written this book to promote discussion, and each of its four chapters, on the subjects above mentioned, has questions added to provoke thought. The whole matter is dealt with briefly but in an earnest, challenging, and intelligent fashion in these chapters (S.C.M.; 1s. net).

School 'Prayers,' in other words, the opening service with which most schools begin the day,

presents a real problem to the teacher. However willing the spirit is, the flesh is sometimes weak. The teacher is shy of conducting such a service on his own. Well, for one part at least of this task the Student Christian Movement Press has just given some assistance in a new book—*Readings from the Bible for School Prayers*, compiled by Miss M. E. Jarvis, M.A., Headmistress of the Girls' County School, Brecon (3s. 6d. net). The compiler has chosen for each week a subject, and five brief readings reveal its main aspects. The readings are simple and practical. A few illuminating notes are added which may enable the teacher to give in a sentence something that will make the passage intelligible and interesting. Little that has importance for the life of youth has been overlooked. The great truths and the great virtues (and the small) are all here. This is a book that many teachers will hail with gratitude.

Still another series of popular apologetic books at a cheap rate, but written by eminent theologians, is being issued. Canon Barry, the Very Rev. S. C. Carpenter, the Rev. F. A. Cockin, and Dom Bernard Clements are among the writers, and the subjects are 'Our Faith in God,' 'The Person of Christ,' 'The Holy Spirit and the Church,' 'Worship,' and, finally, 'Ethics.' The first volume, *Our Faith in God*, is by the Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. W. R. Matthews (S.C.M.; 3s. 6d. net). It bears on every page the characteristic stamp of the Dean's mind. It is interesting. It is massive. It is simple. And it is persuasive. The special topics in this first volume are: Religion and Belief in God; The Hebrew Conception of God; The Revelation of God in Christ; Personality in God; The Trinity and Human Thought; The Love of God; The Love of God and Evil. It would be superfluous to praise the book. It may, however, be hoped that the book will circulate largely, because it possesses a quality invaluable in such literature—a direct sincerity which is disarming to all cavillers.

The Best Books on the Life of Christ.

BY PROFESSOR J. A. ROBERTSON, D.D., ABERDEEN.

EXCEPT for the Apocryphal lives, almost all the biographies of Christ are modern. The Gospels are not lives of our Lord, but rather records of impressions which the man Jesus made upon His con-

temporaries. They are testimonies rather than histories, 'pure crude fact secreted from men's lives when hearts beat hard.' They are characterized by an extraordinary parsimony. A life is

an objective record of facts extending from the cradle to the grave. The Gospels are but the records of a few brief weeks in two or three years of Christ's life, proclaiming the reaction of men's souls to His impact upon them. And they show a marked restraint which is very striking when we compare it to the extravagances of the Apocryphal tales. The study of these tales must, indeed, be followed in a mind familiar with the Synoptic Gospels, by a deep uprush of wonder and faith. For what else could have ensured the survival, the age-long veneration, the unbroken, mysterious power and attraction of the Synoptic story through centuries of folly, noise, and sin, and relegated those strange vivid Apocryphal stories to their present dusty obscurity, but the very mind of Christ, dwelling in His disciples? A gospel can only survive if it is written upon the hearts of men, but it must be written in the indelible ink of Truth. And these other writings, so full of colour and charm, and with all sorts of interesting incidents to relate, have not stood this test. It is not merely that they withered away because of their admission of miraculous events. The Church was uncritical on this point until quite recently. The weakness goes deeper; there is a lack of moral content, of spiritual reality, in them all.

As early as the fourth century we begin to have dramatic renderings of the gospel story. The earliest known Christian Passion play borrows much of its verse from Euripides, and most of the action is laid behind the scenes, and is only reported by messengers. Then more and more, as the music of the Gregorian Mass wearied men with its monotony, processions and oratorios took its place, Christ was tenor and Pilate was bass, Adam and Eve carried the Tree of Knowledge, the Baptist his banner and lamp, Judas his bag, and the Holy women their precious ointment, until, from these simple beginnings, we have, in the mediæval Church such a wide-spread use of religious drama, that the gospel story, read in the churches only in Latin, was played in the vernacular, and often half the town would be in the play, and the other half spectators. It has often been lamented that this method of teaching the Gospels was discarded by Protestantism at the Reformation, but people forget that already by then a deterioration in these sacred dramas had become evident, and their religious value was becoming very doubtful.

Save for the first volume of the *Golden Legend*, there were practically no extra-canonical lives of our Lord printed during the Middle Ages, or indeed until quite modern times. The *Golden Legend* was

compiled by the Bishop of Genoa about 1275, and the first of the six volumes is devoted to the life of Christ. But it is so steeped in the supernatural, and so much more fantastic than historical, that it must be grouped with the old miracle plays rather than with the later Lives.

Then came the Reformation and the translation of the Gospels into the vernacular. It is difficult for us now to grasp how soul-stirring and inspiring that unveiling must have been. Almost it must have been as if men listened with their own ears to the words of the Master, 'The children of the bride-chamber fast not when the Bridegroom is with them.' That freshness endured for centuries. The pious Christian could wish for nothing more than the sacred page itself.

But with the nineteenth century came the days of scientific research, and nothing was exempt. The first great modern life of Jesus was that written by Strauss. In it, reflecting the spirit of his time, he resolves testimony into myth, and discounts the miraculous element. It was published in the year 1846, and was called *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. It was founded upon a false critical hypothesis, but nevertheless it fell like a bombshell from the sky into the heart of Victorian orthodoxy. All through the 'fifties it troubled the faith of our land. The struggle came to a head in the early 'sixties, and is reflected in Browning's *Death in the Desert*, where the poet replies to the destructive arguments of the critic. What was it that Strauss had said? He had declared that we know next to nothing about the actual historic Figure of Jesus of Nazareth. In all the four Gospels Strauss finds His Person shrouded and clouded in the luminous mist of legend and myth which always gathers about the memory of a great man after he has passed away. And in particular in the Gospel according to John, Strauss argues that the Jesus of history almost entirely disappears and in His stead there is painted the portrait, not of a man, but of a ghostly being from the unseen world, framed in a purely imaginary or fictitious setting. All the stories, Strauss asseverates, are symbolical, and the whole document is a subtle and deceptive attempt to persuade men that the carpenter of Nazareth was divine.

After Strauss came Renan, with his *Vie de Jésus*. It was thought out, and partly executed, in Palestine, and the writer's imagination, untroubled and serene, reflects the sacred landscape with the clear faithfulness of some quiet pool beneath the hills. Here, again, miracle is discounted, but Jesus is described as the warm, kindly, genial, and joy-loving Jew, who flings his life away, half-spent, for an

unattainable ideal. The life is an idyll, exquisite, but without any surplus of moral inspiration in its pages. This book, too, made a great sensation when it appeared. It passed through eight editions in three months. It evoked wild streams of criticism, as well as of praise. One of the most striking achievements of the writer is that he has at one and the same time stripped the sacred portrait of every shred of supernaturalism, and left it enthroned as an object of adoration and worship.

Still taking rank as one of the best of the Lives of Jesus is that of Keim, although it appeared as long ago as 1876-83. Keim had no particular theological or critical axe to grind, but was consistently absorbed in trying to discover what really happened, and what was really said, and in consequence he finds a place in the van of modern critical New Testament scholarship. The effect upon the reader is that of a life written from an advanced liberal point of view. Only he considers Matthew to be the primary Gospel. But he does not attempt to harmonize the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptics. He divides the Life of our Lord into two periods, the early period when He was a successful teacher, and the later one when He was a broken, hunted man, fleeing to escape His enemies. In Jesus he finds the loftiest ideal of humanity, the supreme illustration of what human life can attain.

There are other lives by Beyschlag, Haase, Schenkel, H. J. Holtzmann, Weizsäcker, B. Weiss, and there is Wendt's *Teaching of Jesus*. Each has its own particular merits, and sets forth many an aspect of the life in a clearer light. Yet in sum they add little to what can be found in Keim.

A book which made a great sensation when it appeared was *Ecce Homo*, by Seeley, in which the human Christ is set forth in all His graciousness and charm. As he says himself in his Preface, his book is 'not a book of authority, but of inquiry and suggestion; it is intended not to close discussion, but to open it. It asks for consideration and, where it is wrong, for refutation.' He accepts the evidence of all the Evangelists, where they agree. He regards the miracles as at least no after-thoughts of the biographers. The Fourth Gospel is not referred to except in confirmation of statements made in the other Gospels. He says he is glad to have been able 'to draw the attention of the public to that part of Christianity, and for a time to that part alone, in which almost all men are able on the whole to agree, and much of which the greater number of Christian teachers, by taking for granted, practically suppress.' These words indicate that although the book was published so long ago as

1865, its value to-day remains very high. It is only too possible for us to be absorbed in some burning theological problem of the hour, as, for example, the Barthian conception of God, to the exclusion of much other vital matter. Religious experience may be dangerously impoverished in such a case.

Doubly interesting because of the personality of its writer, is *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, by Albert Schweitzer. Here he relentlessly traverses the history of criticism, making the figure of Jesus entirely apocalyptic. He says: 'He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me," and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time.' He says: 'Jesus as a concrete historical personality remains a stranger to our time, but His spirit, which lies hidden in His words, is known in simplicity, and its influence is direct.' This influence has been sufficient to send Schweitzer out to the mission field, and to make him one of the greatest missionaries of our day. It may be, one cannot help surmising, an influence more direct, less entangled with the toils of conscious thought, than even Schweitzer suspects. Otherwise the following passage is difficult to harmonize with his career. 'Jesus, in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.' Was that the theory which sent Schweitzer forth into Darkest Africa? Or was he rather compelled by the Influence of which in the previous quotation he speaks, direct and simple, working, not upon an ingenious and sophisticated intellect, but upon an eager and child-like soul?

Another modern Life, which acquired additional interest because of its writer, was that of the Italian journalist, Giovanni Papini, who wrote the book in the white heat of his conversion from scepticism. It is an imaginative reconstruction of the life of Jesus, within the bounds of orthodoxy.

J. Warschauer's *Historical Life of Christ* is a modernist reconstruction of the gospel story. Here the supernatural is reduced to a minimum,

or rather to vanishing point. He takes it, as Professor Burkitt writes in the Preface, 'as an axiom that modern investigation and discovery has revolutionised our ideas about external nature and the course of ancient history. . . . How did this apparently insignificant episode become the starting-point of so great and persistent development? It is not enough for the Modernist to reject the Catholic view : if his view is to supplant the Catholic view, it must be because it is more adequate, because it is more nearly in harmony with all the facts, the facts not only of the "Life of Christ," but also of the enthusiasm and persistence of the Christians. And here, as it seems to me, comes in the value of Dr. Warschauer's actual achievement.'

Among the ever-increasing number of studies of the Life by laymen, that of J. Middleton Murry has taken a prominent place. This writer does not hesitate to ascribe sinfulness to Jesus, alleging that his submission to baptism could not have been undertaken without consciousness of guilt. The book may be somewhat inchoate and frothy, but it has the great merit of provoking and disturbing the minds and souls of a group of readers who find a more formal theology distasteful. Then there is the *Jesus of Nazareth* by Klausner, the Jewish author. The book is, on the whole, sympathetically written, but it is critical of certain of Jesus' points of view, particularly of His attitude to the scribes and Pharisees of His day, an attitude which Klausner considers was too radical in its condemnation.

We have said nothing of the large number of contemporary plays and novels, more or less based upon the gospel story. Some of these have merit,

notably, among the historical works, George Moore's *The Brook Kerith*, though here neither the psychology nor the history is good, only the beauty of the style is outstanding. Good also is Sudermann's *John*, Rostand's *The Samaritan Woman*, Andreyev's *Judas Iscariot and the Others*. Among the works which attempt to reincarnate something of Jesus' bearing and power there stand out Fogazzaro's *Saint*, Dostoevsky's *Idiot*, Kennedy's *Servant in the House*, Jerome K. Jerome's *Passing of the Third Floor Back*, Gerhart Hauptmann's *Fool in Christ*. But very often the portrait of Jesus which has been painted in plays and novels is nothing more than a picture of the writer's personal ideal man, set against the Galilean background, or, if the hero is modern, endowed with some of the more conventional trappings of Divinity.

Contrasting with these, and of far more value, is a group where there is an imaginative attempt to live out, or think out, the life of Jesus amid the social conditions of our time. Among these there stand out Tolstoi's *Confessions*, Florence Converse's *Children of Light*, Rosegger's *God-Seekers* and his *I.N.R.I.*, Paul Heyse's *Children of the World*, Frenssen's *Hilligenlei*, and Selma Lagerlöf's *Miracles of Anti-Christ*. This last is a fine study of the relationship of Socialism and Christianity, or rather, we might say, a moving revelation of the narrowness of the awful gulf which separates every dream of an earthly Paradise from the Christian vision of the Kingdom of God. Socialism, the author maintains, is Anti-Christ, and the task of the Church is not to demolish this great ideal, but to remould it into the heavenly pattern.

The Origin and Growth of Religion.

BY THE REVEREND CANON J. BATTERSBY HARFORD, D.D., RIPON.

THE history of religion provides us with a study, which is fascinating, but also of great difficulty. Thinking men must always have had times when their thoughts turned back to the past and they asked themselves: What was the form which religion took at the beginning of our human race? But it was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that the comparative study of religion took scientific shape. Following upon the discoveries of new continents in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries, and of peoples and religions hitherto unknown, men, seeing the immense number of forms in which religion had taken shape upon this earth, were compelled to ask: How came religion to take so many forms? What can it have been like at the beginning?

It was natural that at first Christian scholars should turn to the Old Testament, and that some should have thought that whatsoever was good in pagan religions must have been borrowed