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PART III

A.

The origins of Christianity; the character of Christ; his 'gospel' (good news); the significance of his career and 'person' (the very word is thick with implications); his claims and 'Christhood' (Messiahship; 'the Anointed'); his historical and cosmic significance - all these have become surrounded with a 'magnetic field' of such extent and depth, such emotional charge, such 'faith' and prejudice, such rival theological assumptions and associations, such speculations ranging from deity to complete scepticism as to whether he ever existed at all except in excitable human imaginations - that anyone who enters this 'field' must either be caught (like Milton's fallen angels) 'in wandering mazes lost', or go right through with it with firm intention and to the bitter end.

It would of course be foolish to deny the influence of this powerful magnetic field, which acts strongly - positively or negatively - on everyone who approaches it. Nor can the nature and significance of such claims be ignored; the New Testament records themselves start from and move into whole clusters of such beliefs and emotions. I shall therefore ^{begin by} stating assumptions and intentions as clearly as possible, and leave it to the good-will and understanding of the reader to judge my conclusions by the evidence.

This whole enquiry has been concerned with one object: to trace the workings and development of that dynamic core of energy in human nature which has taken shape both as a mere 'creator', and as a force opposed to the 'creative advance'. I propose now to approach the story of the Founder of Christianity and his 'gospel' strictly from this limited point of view. I have found the conclusions surprising but quite clear and

convincing.

An Analysis of the New Testament records discovers at their centre a most original personality and a most original gospel. And as we follow the story of this person and his gospel we are led to a series of happenings each of which seems wholly improbable, and which yet must undoubtedly have happened.

The life of Judaism was founded in its strong religious faith and tradition. This faith had become focussed in a conviction that the whole of human history is a working out of the purpose of a Creator-God who controls every event in it; that it was moving to a climax; and that the divine goal would sooner or later be 'realised' by a 'Messiah' - God's representative on earth, the embodiment of His will and power. This Messiah would inaugurate 'the Reign of God', completely transforming the present world order which was enslaved to evil and brutal powers. It is not difficult to find in this Messianic hope, an 'imagination' of what the mass creatrix had been obscurely and painfully struggling towards, its dreaming on things hoped for and perhaps to come.

One day a poor carpenter from an obscure village in half-pagan Galilee, wholly without political power or wealth or influence, appeared with the claim that he was the expected Messiah. The ground of this claim was in Jesus' discovery that God's essential characteristic is not overwhelming power but 'loving-kindness'. The best clue to understanding the nature of God's 'Reign' was therefore the kind of affection and trust to be found in a good (humane) family; God was most truly known as 'Our Father in Heaven', and men as 'the children of His love'. This meant a

radical transformation of men's whole conception of God, of His 'power', of His way with men, His purpose, His 'Kingdom' and His Messiah. A poor peasant who became a wandering preacher could very well be the Messiah of such a God. His claims would rest on knowledge of this divine 'secret' (mystery) that God's nature is love, and love the divine activity. This discovery and claim were so revolutionary that they must inevitably appear to the orthodox as 'blasphemous' - heresy. And the divine 'Law' (Torah) strictly enjoined that all such heretics ('false prophets') should be put to death. ^{it called them} (The Inquisition later acted on precisely the same principle). This presented Jesus with a terrible dilemma. For his friends and followers, though they had become persuaded by Jesus' sheer goodness that he was the Messiah, were ignorant and simple men, (how ignorant and simple the record itself makes very clear), who clung to the beliefs about the Messiah in which they had been brought up; their response to Jesus personally had not penetrated to these assumptions, which they continued simply to take for granted. But from that point of view, a Messiah condemned by the leaders of the nation as a heretic, and crucified by the authorities ('hanged as a common criminal'), was simply unimaginable. And yet unless Jesus abandoned his 'mission' and claims altogether, it was quite certain (as he realized) that this was what would happen to him. Then Jesus would be dead; and the belief of his followers in his Messiahship - and with ^{it} his new 'Gospel' - would be destroyed with him. Plainly, so long as these disciples clung to their old beliefs, nothing could survive such a disaster. But how was he to change their old beliefs? There was one possible solution. Suppose he explained to them, over and over again and with the utmost clearness, that

it was precisely his new revolutionary beliefs about God and Messiahship that made it inevitable (for this was his own reading of the situation) that he should be put to death on account of them; and for that very reason he was quite deliberately choosing to die for his gospel; and that God wanted and intended him to do so. In that case there was at least a possibility that when they were in this way faced with the necessity of choosing to abandon either him and their belief in him or their old traditional beliefs about Messiahship, their affection and trust would make them see the truth. The risk was appalling. The chances of success were remote indeed, as their whole behaviour at once made clear - their response to his repeated appeals showed that those appeals made no impression whatever. That was the situation when Jesus died - died crying (as Mark candidly admits) the unhappy words of the Psalmist: 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me'. And in spite of everything Jesus proved right! His followers did find that they could not cease to believe in him. They did come to see that a crucified Messiah must be accepted as part of God's purpose both by Jesus' God and by Jesus as His Messiah. This did become the β very hall-mark of the new faith. Paul says so in so many words. And all the subsequent records take it for granted. This is the first of the series of improbabilities that would be scarcely believable - if they had not happened. But the evidence compels us to believe it!

The next was this. The shocked orthodoxy that put the leader to death now (inevitably) turned on the heresy that his followers were reviving and repeating. The lead was taken by an 'enthusiast' (in the contemporary sense) who seemed by nature and training to be 'made' for the

part of Grand Inquisitor. And who ever heard of a Grand Inquisitor being converted to the arch-heresy by the heretics he was preparing to burn at the stake? Yet this is precisely what happened. This is not an inference; it is what the Grand Inquisitor himself tells us over and over again with the most moving and passionate sincerity. Harried and persecuted alike by the outraged consciences of his fellow Jews and by indignant pagans, Paul remained so inspired by the new Gospel of Jesus that he wrote a tribute to the 'Christ-love' which stands side by side with Jesus own authentic teachings as unsurpassed in the literature of the world. With uncompromising loyalty to his new 'faith', he completely rethought and transformed the conception of God in which he had been brought up, making generosity and 'loving-kindness' ^(Lev. 19:18) as much the supreme characteristics of God's nature and activity as they had been to his 'Master', Jesus himself. The whole 'glory' (Shekinah) of this God of Jesus had been (he said), and still was reflected and visible 'in the face of Jesus', that Messiah who had died for men upon a Cross (I Cor. I and passim). This was the second bear-impossibility which (we are tempted to say) couldn't have happened - and did.

The third is this. The current beliefs and traditions of the age, both in Judaism and among the 'common people' of the Empire, were quite irreconcilable with the 'original' gospel of Jesus; but they were so powerful and so persuasive that they acted like hidden magnets, distorting and misrepresenting that gospel: we can observe them visibly and powerfully at work in the ^{our} New Testament records - including not only ^{the} later writings, Acts and the Fourth Gospel, but the synoptists themselves. How could the original gospel have possibly survived such sincere unconscious and universal prejudices? Yet they did. We can still find them side by side

in these records. It is this that enables us to recover the original gospel there.

A final paradox. Without power or 'influence' or wealth (like their Jesus Messiah), the new Christian Communities began spreading through the Empire by the sheer quality of their living. The Roman authorities became alarmed, and determined to stamp out the new faith which had by now become a political heresy. The Empire was the most powerful and efficiently 'imperial power' in history; and it had at its command all the familiar resources of the Grand - Inquisitor - Dictator. The new community had no such resources. But it was the 'Christians' who brought the proud Empire (civis Romanus sum) to its knees.

It is easy enough, in the light of our present day assumptions and outlook, to dismiss the extraordinary claims that were now being made for Jesus - within a generation of his death - and which continued to be developed throughout the later New Testament documents, and beyond into the history of the Church, - as the disordered phantasies of the credulous people of that age. But before we do so, it might be well to look back to the original figure of Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, who had nothing to commend him but the quality of his life and friendship, and of his God. Consider too those, worthy but very simple-minded, 'stew', 'dull', 'blind' (the adjectives are all in the gospel records) followers of his who had nothing to offer but their (easily intimidated) loyalty. Then let us ask ourselves how such extraordinary beliefs came to be passionately asserted about this Jesus in so short a time. This is the last, and not the least, astonishing, of the succession of improbabilities. It is plain fact that

all of these happened, and that they are so closely connected with one another that we can regard them as developments of one event. It is impossible to deny them unless we are prepared to dismiss the whole of the available evidence.

Considered from the strictly limited point of view of the mens creatrix and its history, these events may suggest the following conclusions. In all this series of happenings the mens creatrix was embodying itself in the most successful effort it has yet made, both actually to create in the historical process, and to foreshadow (as prophetic soul of the human world dreaming on things to come) the goal to which it is being drawn as the ultimate fulfilment of all its needs and hopes. ^(the world Commonwealth of Persons) Jesus of Nazareth not only reveals the clearest insight into the nature of this self-realization (the 'at-one-ment' of its present 'alienation') of humanity in its humanness - which, translated into the religious language of his people, appears as 'the fulfilment of the divine purpose in history'; but he actually did embody - 'incarnate' - it both in his own person and personal relations, and in the group of friends he gathered round him. The achievement of this insight, together with the power of this embodiment, released such a dynamic activity of the mens creatrix that, for a time, it proved irresistible. It produced a unique quality of living. It also stimulated the 'creative imagination' of Jesus' followers to explore all the appropriate beliefs, convictions and conceptions of the day in order to find appropriate terms and symbols to express their growing understanding of what man's real nature as mens creatrix could become. It gave birth to hopes and dreams of what it might be when it had fully realized itself. It led to a

conviction, for which they were ready to die, that a 'Christian' community embodying 'the mind of Christ' (his spirit of love) was the utmost wisdom, the utmost reality and 'power' that humanity can reach.

As the original inspiration of Jesus' personality grew more remote with time and passed into a different environment, the magnetism of the old forces began to assert its power. But the event, the person of Jesus, and Jesus' gospel, have always remained; and - in spite of the evils that have been committed in his name, and in spite of the efforts of the Grand Inquisitor to undo his work - ^{so has} the evidence of what Jesus has meant to the human mass creatrix in its struggle towards self-knowledge and self-realisation all through the nineteen and a half centuries since his death, and which has been steadily accumulating. What that evidence may persuade a man to believe, everyman can discover for himself without difficulty.

The rest of this paper is devoted to the documentary evidence on which these conclusions are based. This includes: -

1. An attempt to interpret 'the mind of Christ', as recorded in the New Testament accounts of his activities, his words, his public career, and his personality. Of course this was not the aim of the authors themselves; and their records are fragmentary and not seldom discrepant. Such an undertaking is therefore bound to be speculative - a plain attempt to exercise the creative imagination. But it is the best means at our disposal; and is, I believe, indispensable to a true understanding.
2. A brief consideration of the possibility of discovering and comparing the different 'portraits' of Jesus in the New Testament writings.
3. An analysis of the gospels as historical records.

Pl III B is a revised version of
'The man of Nazareth'.

PART THREE

C

The Argument

The assumption on which this 'argument' is based, and from which its conclusions are drawn, is the outcome of an analytical study of the Gospels as historical records. Since these records are comparatively brief and straight-forward it is a relatively simple matter to arrange them in parallel columns side-by-side and observe at what points they agree, differ or contradict one another; and what passages are peculiar to each. From this comparison it is again a relatively simple matter to draw conclusions as to the characteristics of the authors as historians. None of the documents were intended to be simple, historical records of what had 'actually happened'. They all share an avowed and deliberate purpose, which was to convince their hearers or readers that Jesus of Nazareth was both 'the Jewish Messiah' (Christos in their colloquial Greek: the 'Koiné'). The God who had 'revealed' Himself and His purposes particularly in the 'Old Testament', had now fully revealed them in Jesus the Christ. Jesus' life and death were therefore the climax and completion of this self-revelation of God and ^{of} the working out of His purpose in history.

This conviction is common to all the New Testament writers; and their primary object in writing was both to produce this conviction in readers who did not share it, and to strengthen the faith and understanding of those who did. In their terms, it was a religious 'message' ('good news' of God; euangelion) that they were concerned with. The Gospels were part of their effort to 'preach' (publicly proclaim) this 'truth', and so to carry on and complete the 'movement' that Jesus had 'inaugurated' in his life, teaching and death.

The 'incarnation', or embodiment of God's nature and purpose in a particular individual human and historical person, necessarily involved limitations of 'divinity'. St. Paul even goes so far as to say that in becoming 'in-carnate' (embodied) Christ 'emptied himself' (ἐκένωσε ἑαυτόν) surrendering certain of his 'privileges' or 'prerogatives' as 'the Son of God' (*Philip ii. 5f* *Mk. 44*). The New Testament writers, including the authors of the Gospels, were not all agreed as to what these specific limitations were or involved. All were agreed, however, that Jesus ended his career by being crucified. This was an accepted historical fact. No one, let alone any Jew or Jewish proselyte, had ever before imagined that such a fate could happen to God's Messiah. It was 'shocking' (what the New Testament calls 'the stumbling block' or 'blasphemy'), incredible. But since it had happened to this 'Jesus the Messiah' 'who was the Son of God', it 'must' have been crucial in 'God's purpose'. The crucifixion was therefore bound to be the central point - and problem - of the 'preaching' and the records. It is quite obviously so in all the main New Testament writings. But linked up with this is an equal insistence on 'the Resurrection'. This too was inevitable, if Jesus was 'the Christ of God'

Analysis of the Gospel records by 'the plain historical method' is a very simple piece of historical research because the synoptic documents are themselves simple, naive and short.

Understanding of St. Paul's Letters, and the Fourth Gospel and Acts, requires a more detailed knowledge of the contemporary historical background; but the material for such study is more than ample. The

only complicating factor would arise from the numerous theories of special 'inspiration' that have been held almost universally - though in very different forms - in all branches of the Christian Church. Is there any evidence to suggest that the New Testament authors were in some way 'supernaturally' protected from the ordinary errors and limitations to which historians are subject? Fortunately, this can be very easily tested. There was only one 'resurrection'; and it appears in five different accounts. It is a simple matter to compare them.

If we can trace an original 'portrait' of Jesus in the records, we can also (I suggest) discover the original gospel. We are justified in assuming that this is original because it stands in sharp contradiction both to the current beliefs and traditions of the contemporary world, and to the unconscious prejudices and tendencies of the recorders themselves. It is therefore the very last thing that any of them could have wanted to invent. If it nevertheless does survive embedded in the records themselves, this can only be because it belonged to the original 'tradition' as handed down by the eye witnesses; it was remembered as having been spoken or done by Jesus himself. All of these 'eye witnesses' and recorders were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth, their teacher and friend, was in truth the 'Messiah' whom God had 'sent' in accordance with his promises (Old Testament) to inaugurate and embody 'the reign of God' on earth and fulfil the divine purpose. They had also come to believe that he was 'the Son of God' and the embodiment of the divine in a human person. How then could they reject or deny anything that he was honestly remembered to have said and done, however 'hard to understand' or believe? They could only try to interpret it according to the best of their lights. This is what the oral tradition and the writers of the Gospels did. What was the 'original gospel'? It was based on a conviction (faith is the New Testament word) similar to that expressed by Keats ("the world is a vale of soul-maturing^{making}"); and by Bergson ("the universe is an instrument designed for the creation of creators") - i.e. for the development of 'free spirits'. This is exactly what St. Paul said in his own idiom: "The whole creation is waiting with absorbed longing ('on the tip-toe of expectation'), like a woman in the

pangs of child birth, for the moment when it will be reborn in its divine likeness as God's child. For our hope is that not only man but "the entire creation will one day be set free from its present slavery to enjoy the glorious freedom of divine sonship". (^{Rom} Rev. VIII 15f).

This 'sonship' - the condition of being a child of God, now to be thought of as 'Father', and reflecting that divine likeness - was taken over by St. Paul from Jesus himself as the key to Jesus' gospel. This conviction of St. Paul is explained and confirmed by the synoptic records of the Sermon on the Mount ('Q') and the Parable of the Prodigal ('L'). In these earliest sources Jesus takes the parent-child relationship ('Your heavenly Father') as his central clue to the understanding of man's relation to God, and he never ceased trying to help his followers to see it in that light. Nothing could be more simple or more illuminating. Every decent parent knows that if you want the love and trust and happiness of your children the last thing in the world you can do is to bully or bribe or cajole them into such a response. Trust and affection have to be won; and how Jesus himself understood this is made luminously clear in the Parable of the Prodigal (Luke IV). The same is true of every quality that we want our children to develop: courage, initiative, healthy curiosity, response to beauty, the determination to get at the truth, 'the hunger and thirst for goodness' (Mt V. 6) and so forth. But if this is so, it is quite incredible that God ('your Father in heaven') would ever impose on men an 'infallible' or 'absolute' revelation to be accepted purely on authority; or that he should have endowed the followers of Jesus with 'supernatural' memories and insight, and guarded them miraculously against

all error. Belief in such an 'infallible' revelation, over-riding ordinary human nature, is incompatible with the belief that God chose the Cross as the 'price' of man's freedom and sonship; and this belief is again explicitly stated by Jesus in the records (Mark vi 29f). Jesus' own viewpoint is expressed with beautiful simplicity in such parables as: 'How life grows' (Mark IV 26f & 30), and 'How truth works' (Luke 13²⁰. Q).

As far as the records are concerned, however, we do not have to rely only on inference from Jesus' principles. We can submit the question of their 'infallibility' to a direct and decisive test. Firstly, everyone, orthodox or unorthodox, would agree that there can have been only one 'Resurrection': in New Testament terms, it was 'hapax': 'once for all'. It follows that all the accounts must refer to the same event. Secondly, all the records assume that this was the central issue after Jesus' death (e.g. Acts III, IV, XXVI; I Cor. XV). And the reason is obvious. If Jesus was 'annihilated', extinguished like a blown-out candle at his death on the Cross, then God could not possibly be what Jesus believed He was. In that case the faith on which he had staked his life and gospel and for which he went to the Cross, was an illusion: he had 'staked' all and lost. In that case, as Paul put it bluntly, all the beliefs of 'the Churches', including Paul's own converts and Paul himself, were a mockery and a delusion. The pagans were right: 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die'. (I Cor. XV). But if, as both Paul and his converts were quite convinced, God ^{is} 'Your Father in Heaven' (to use Jesus' own words), if the Cross was God's choice, then 'God was in Christ' when he went to the Cross. So Jesus was now more intimately present than ever, the unseen but dynamic centre of the powers

and splendours of Creative Life. Jesus had been right, and everything he had said and done was alight with truth and reality.

It is therefore not surprising that, for all the New Testament writers, while the Cross was the heart of the new 'revelation', the resurrection was the core of their faith.

Our accounts of the Resurrection come from five different sources. If the records are infallible, all the accounts must agree. If they do not agree the infallibility of the records is disproved 'once for all'.

The first account, written a generation before the Gospels and therefore the earliest and, most authoritative, is that given by St. Paul in I Cor. XV. He makes it clear beyond a doubt that as this lies at the root of the Christian faith it should be treated with careful accuracy.

"In the first place, I passed on to you 'the tradition' as I myself was told it. It runs, you remember, like this:

Christ died for our sins, as the scripture had said the Messiah would.

He was buried, and then rose from the dead two days later, as the

Scriptures said the Messiah would.

After his resurrection he was seen.

First by Peter;

Next by the Twelve;

Next by a company of over 500 believers: most of whom are still
alive to-day;

Next by James (the brother of Jesus)

Then a second time by the Twelve;

And last of all by me - a posthumously born Apostle!"

St. Paul is careful to remind his readers that this was the account 'handed on' to him at his 'conversion'; that is to say probably three or four years after the Crucifixion. He adds that the account had already been agreed upon and formulated in set words. We can therefore be certain that we here reach the earliest memories of the original eye-witnesses themselves. Further, we note that St. Paul takes special pains to do something quite unique in his letters; he gives each one of the appearances known to the 'tradition' in its proper order; his 'next .. then..' is the equivalent of numbering them. And we note particularly that the first and crucial turning point was (as we should expect) an 'appearance' to Peter.

The Epistle (I Cor.) was almost certainly written by about 50 A.D. at the latest. Our four Gospels were all written at least a generation later. The evidence does not admit of accurate dating; but we shall be justified in putting Mark at not earlier than 72-5 A.D. and the other three about 5 to 10 years later, say between 80 and 90 A.D. All this time Paul's letters had been in circulation, and were being read publicly in the various Church centres and elsewhere. The Gospel accounts of the Resurrection therefore come as a complete surprise. They do not mention the 'appearances' to James or to 'the 500' - though James was, as we know from Paul's earliest letters, 'a pillar of the earliest Church at Jerusalem (e.g. GalI 18-19, II 9; cf. Acts 12¹⁷) and St. Paul expressly says that many of 'the 500' were still alive in A.D.50 and could therefore be appealed to as 'eye witnesses'. Even the crucial appearance to Peter is only referred to once in the synoptists (Luke XXIV 34); and that a cursory reference without a single detail. And yet Luke, in both his Gospel and

that part of
 Acts, follows the 'jerusalem - Peter' tradition exclusively - right up to the point at which he starts abruptly quoting from 'the diary' (Acts XVI 10) suggesting that Luke may ^{then} have joined Paul as a travelling-companion.

It is remarkable then that in all the four Gospels the central place is now given to 'appearances' to the women - though the 'tradition' which Paul learnt by (say) 5 A.D. knows nothing whatever of ^{any of} these appearances; ^{to name} and even as late as 50 A.D. St. Paul has not so much as heard of them!

We can further narrow our enquiry to one point: where did the resurrection appearances and the final parting of Jesus from the disciples take place? The earliest of the Gospels is Mark; it was used extensively by Matthew and Luke; and it is, without mention, but by implication, assumed by the Fourth Gospel. Now one of the puzzles of gospel criticism has been the disappearance of the original ending of Mark: it stops in the middle of a narrative, and even perhaps in the middle of a sentence. (See Moffatt). There are, however, indications in the latter part of Mark's narrative which make it certain that according to Mark, the 'appearances' took place in Galilee. Jesus' own words (Mark XIV 28): "After I am risen I will precede you into Galilee" are repeated to the women at the tomb by the angels: "Go and remind the disciples, especially Peter, that Jesus will precede you into Galilee, and that you will find him there - as he told you" (XVI 7). Matthew follows Mark, though his details are surprisingly scanty. In Matthew XXVIII 7 the angel gives the same message to the women; but Matthew adds that on their way back Jesus himself meets them and repeats the same words (XXVIII 10). Scanty as these details are, it is plain that the Galilean tradition claimed the authority

both of 'an angel' and of Jesus himself. And when we turn to Luke we see the reason for this emphatic repetition. For Luke states even more deliberately and emphatically, and with far more detail that not only did all the 'appearances' take place at Jerusalem but that Jesus himself repeatedly warned the disciples not to leave Jerusalem; and that they did not do so (Luke XXIV 9f, Acts I passim). According to Matthew, Jesus takes farewell of the disciples in Galilee: "On the hill at which he had told them to meet him" (Matt. XXVIII 16); and he makes no mention of a visible 'ascension'. The Luke-Acts 'Jerusalem' tradition directly contradicts this: the final meeting - which ends in a literal 'ascension' - takes place on 'the Mount of Olives' two miles outside Jerusalem. (Luke XXIV 50: the naive literalism was characteristic of Luke). Acts elaborates the Lucan account still further: after the resurrection Jesus spends 'forty days' (the 'ideal' number: cf. Moses and Elijah ^{King ix. 8} ~~Deut. x. 9~~ and the Temptation Mt (v. 2 φ) "talking to them about the Reign of God" - which must mean explaining to them its true nature. The Lucan warning that they must not leave Jerusalem is repeated not only by Jesus himself but by two angels; and it is of course obeyed (Acts I 11-12).

We have thus two irreconcilable traditions, each emphatically claiming the authority of Jesus himself, and angelic support. And as he ^{Luke} must have been aware of this contradiction, it must have been deliberate; for not only does the gospel of Luke use Mark as its main (almost sole) narrative source up to the Last Journey; but the saying of the angels in Mark - 'Go tell the disciples that they will find him in Galilee, as he told them' - is changed by Luke into "Remember how he told you when he was in

Galilee" that he would be crucified and rise again (Mark XVI 7, Luke XXIV 6,7) Nothing could be clearer. There were two different and conflicting traditions surviving after about 70 A.D. and belonging to different centres. One is a 'Jerusalem' tradition, the source also of Luke's special gospel material (L); the other is a 'Galilee' tradition. The peculiar thing is that both claim St. Peter as their authority. For the Church tradition was that Mark's gospel owed its ^{authority} to the fact that it recorded recollections of Peter's preaching.

Nor is that all. Further examination shows that this Jerusalem tradition of the first half of Acts deliberately challenges all St. Paul's own repeated claims by insisting that St. Peter was not only the leader of the new movement - (as Mark's gospel puts it: 'the foundation-stone' of the Church: Matt.XVI 17-19) - but also the real 'apostle to the Gentiles'. The contradiction is deliberate. For this time we know that there was an open conflict. In I and II Galatians we have St. Paul's first-hand account, written over a generation earlier, of his call to be 'the apostle of the Gentiles'. Paul asserts again and again, specifically and in detail that this 'Mission to the Gentiles' brought him into open conflict with the Jerusalem 'authorities', and Peter in particular. He gives a scrupulously careful account of his own version of this open breach and presses his claims with the most passionate sincerity ('I swear before God that what I am saying is absolutely true'. Gal.I 20). Here is his full statement: "When God chose to 'reveal' His Son to me (his term is 'apocalypsis' - the word St. Paul regularly uses for a direct divine revelation or inspiration), in order that I might 'carry him' to the Gentiles, instead of at once

going up to Jerusalem to see the original apostles, I went away into Arabia, and then returned to Damascus." Evidently his 'call' was something new, on which the 'authorities' in Jerusalem could give him no help and which they would be likely to oppose; so St. Paul must think it all out for himself and be quite certain of what he was doing. "It was three years later that I went to Jerusalem in order to get in touch with Peter. I stayed two weeks with him. I did not see any of the other apostles except James.. I was still quite unknown personally to the Church in Judea. I did not go again to Jerusalem until 14 years later; and then my determination to go was the result of another direct 'inspiration' (~~from~~ 'apocalypsis'- not human prompting or invitation)... There were some false Christians who were trying to get you Gentile converts enslaved to the Law" (these men belonged to the Jewish-Christian Church in Judea, whose centre was in Jerusalem); "but I refused to yield an inch. Actually the so-called 'authorities' there (though personally I don't care what claims are made for them; such titles mean nothing in God's eyes) - accepted all my claims; they fully recognised that I had been entrusted with the gospel 'for the Gentiles' (the 'uncircumcised') as Peter had been for the Jewish Christians (the 'circumcised'). For the same God who 'energised' in Peter to become the Apostle to the Jews, 'energised' in me to become the apostle to the Gentiles. The so called 'Pillars of the Church' recognising that God had so called me, accepted me as such on the sole understanding that my sphere of work was to be the Gentile world, as theirs was the Jewish world. When later Peter came to Antioch, then I was obliged to criticise him to his face because at first he took meals with the Gentile converts, but

when some emissaries arrived from James, he withdrew because he was intimidated by the pro-circumcision party". (Gal. I and II; cf. I Cor. XVI 1f II Cor. VIII 1f). It is clear then who was the centre of 'opposition': it was James and his party. Peter, as his character in the Gospels would lead us to expect, is ready to compromise with both parties, but is easily led to change his mind.

If we now turn to Acts, we find everyone of St. Paul's passionate claims and affirmations denied point by point. The spear-point of the Christian 'mission' is now not in the Provinces and the new Churches, but in Jerusalem. It is Peter, the leader of the Jewish Christian community who is directly 'inspired' (Paul's apocalypse) to become the first 'Apostle to the Gentiles', and he remains so to the end (Acts X 24f). The crucial point at issue is 'eating with' the Gentiles (X 11f XI 2). Peter is criticised by the orthodox members of his own group for doing this, but silences his critics by referring to his 'revelation' about it - and who is he to oppose God? (XI 8) St. Paul does not come in until much later; and even then he does so only at the invitation of Peter and his associates, in order to help the new 'mission to the Gentiles' started by the Cypriots with the support of Peter (XI 22f). So far from Paul's initiative being a 'revelation' or directly 'inspired' (Gal III 2), he is only sent for later by the Jerusalem authorities to act as a subordinate emissary of the Jerusalem group (XI 25). In the crisis which Paul refers to as occurring 17 years after his 'conversion' and 'call' to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. I 17f), the Jerusalem tradition, followed by Acts again, declares emphatically that Peter has been the chosen Apostle to the Gentiles "from the first, as everybody knows very well", and his claim is again

supported by James (Acts XV 7f). Actually, this account asserts, it was Paul who tried to compromise by having one of his young converts circumcised to appease the 'circumcision (Judaising) party' (Acts XVI 1-3; contrast Gal. II 3). Only now is Paul fully commissioned to work as a missionary to the Gentiles, and is 'ordained' for this by the local leaders of the Church; it is they who are prompted 'by the Holy Spirit' to do this (Acts XIII 1f).

Thus, a comparison of Gal. I and II with Acts X, XI and XV throws a vivid light on the whole situation and explains St. Paul's passionate reaction to it in Galatians. When the account in Acts XV represents Peter as getting up and saying: "You are all perfectly well aware that from the very first God chose me as the person through whom the Gentiles were to be given the Gospel. God, who can read the innermost secrets of all men's hearts, himself set the seal on this .." - when this was recorded in Acts, St. Paul's Galatian Letter had been in circulation, and read publicly in the provincial Churches for over 30 years! So there can be no doubt whatever that the Jerusalem-tradition side of the controversy which Luke was following, was nothing less than the 'attack' to which Paul was reacting with such warmth and sincerity a generation earlier in Galatians, answering it point by point and appealing to God as his witness. The Acts version shows that the same attack was still being repeated, in detail and unmodified, more than 30 years later by the Jewish-Christian Community in the teeth of all Paul's denials.

Luke himself was not in the least hostile to St. Paul. On the contrary, as soon as Luke stops following the Jerusalem tradition and joins

Paul, he gives a vivid and enthusiastic picture of St. Paul as the great Apostle of the Gentiles and Christian hero; and Paul himself refers to his personal friendship with Luke as a trusted companion. But if Luke himself had no intention of being a partisan, the earlier part of Acts does throw a very revealing light on his capacities as a historian. He was, as all the evidence shows, a prosaic and orthodox writer, quite incapable of criticising his sources, which he follows blindly.

Now it is this same 'Jerusalem-tradition' source that Luke uses in his gospel to supplement Mark and Q - the 'L' source which provides him with all his special material. And it is this source which brings him into collision with the Marcan 'Galilee-tradition'. On this point too, when Luke wrote his gospel and the opening chapters of Acts, the old controversies were still very much alive. When therefore Luke stresses "the command of Jesus" that the Apostles should stay in Jerusalem and not go to Galilee, the statement is anything but casual; it is a deliberate denial - as controversial as its continued rebutting of St. Paul's claims of the Galilee tradition of the resurrection appearances. But the continued existence of two contradictory accounts of so central event as the Resurrection would present the early Church with an acutely critical situation. To have let them both stand would have created a scandal of which their opponents would have taken immediate advantage. They could not both be true. The central position of St. Peter in Mark's gospel is obvious. And the tradition that it was based on Mark's recollections of Peter's preaching is a plausible one. But it is also St. Peter who is the dominant figure of the Acts 'Jerusalem' tradition. Assuming then that the Jewish-Christian

community had possession of Mark's 'gospel of Peter's reminiscences', and it conflicted with their own tradition, one or other would have to be suppressed. For consider the situation. Before Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jewish Christian Community had moved with Peter to Rome, 'the centre of the world'; and Matthew's record shows that it claimed to be the true Church, founded directly by Jesus himself and resting on his authority (Matt. XVI 17-19: 'M'). But Mark was Peter's 'interpreter'; and his gospel, though never claiming to be written by an eye-witness, was so authoritative (as the Gospel according to St. Peter), that both Luke and Mark used it as their original source. And here was 'the Peter-Gospel-tradition' flatly contradicting 'the Jerusalem-Peter' tradition! The quarrel with St. Paul was not as to the fact of 'the Gentile Mission' (which both parties admitted) but only about who was its 'Apostle'; it was therefore not central to 'the Faith'. But the Resurrection was admitted to be absolutely central by all Communities of the Church; and we have already seen what St. Paul had to say about it. But if both the Marcan tradition and the Jerusalem tradition followed by Luke claimed St. Peter as their 'foundation' (Matt. XVI 17) and authority, the two accounts, being contradictory, could not both be Peter's account of it! And yet St. Paul's original record of 'the tradition' puts the appearance to Peter 'first of all'. Luke's Jerusalem tradition is also aware of this appearance to Peter (Luke XXIV 34), but as we have seen, passes it over hurriedly with a mere glancing reference and without a single detail. There must have been some powerful reason for such an extraordinary silence. But suppose the Mark - Peter tradition in question contradicted their own firm Jerusalem- tradition

recorded by Luke? In other words, what if it was a Galilean tradition? Now there is one beautiful and most characteristic story which appears to have come from the non-canonical Gospel to the Hebrews (*Jn XXI. 1f.*) which became attached to the end of the Fourth Gospel. ^{after the crucifixion} It says that Peter and the others had gone back to Galilee and had resumed their old occupation as fishermen on the Lake. Every place and every detail of their activities would be charged with the most poignant memories. According to Luke (V 1) it was while Peter and his friends were so occupied that Jesus had originally 'called' them to join him as 'fishers of men'. And now Jesus was crucified; and Peter had betrayed him. One morning, as they returned in the gray light of dawn, Jesus was there. He had come, so to speak, to 'recommission' Peter; to show that he was forgiven and to 'call' him again - this time to be the 'shepherd' of his 'flock'. Nothing more exquisitely characteristic of the original Jesus and his gospel could be imagined. Something of this sort may surely have been the Marcan version based on Peter's own memories. (Luke XXIV 34, John XXI 1f). But if that was accepted, the whole Jerusalem tradition recorded in Luke - Acts was false from beginning to ~~end~~. So the 'elders', to whom St. Paul refers so irreverently, had to make their choice. The ending of Mark's gospel is 'lost'.

However that may be, the accounts of the Resurrection in our records do establish one fact beyond the possibility of contradiction. Neither 'a risen Christ' nor 'a Holy Ghost' interfered 'miraculously' or 'supernaturally' with the recorders, the 'eye-witnesses' or the friends; or with their memories at any stage, however crucial the issue. They were left to do their own human best. The records themselves have already

demonstrated this with clarity and completeness. There is therefore no need to trace the accounts of the Resurrection further and show how they all contradict one another at every point; e.g. that the angelic appearances - unknown to Paul - are superfluous, pointless and confined to the 'Women' - tradition (of which Paul knows nothing); and differ in detail in all the records. *(The presence of the mother of Jesus appears only in the IV Gospel)*

To sum up: Any attempt to base belief in the 'infallibility or inspired accuracy, or any other form of 'miraculous interference', of the New Testament records must break down completely in face of the two examples of irreconcilable conflict in the evidence examined above.

With this fact established, we can return to the main point. If we were right in our assumption that the original gospel of Jesus is to be interpreted in terms of fatherhood and sonship as described in the earliest sources, any such 'interference' or over-riding of human nature would be contrary to Jesus' whole conception of the nature of God and his relation to men. Belief in a 'risen Christ' would therefore have to be based on quite other grounds. Nor do the records leave us in any doubt as to what such grounds should be. When Jesus himself was challenged on this subject (Mark XII 18f), he based his answer entirely on the love of God, His 'friendship' and affection and respect for the human beings He had created. If God is what Jesus declared Him to be, the great and generous Giver and the Lover of men, He could be trusted not to let His 'children' and His 'friends' be simply blotted out by the accident of death. Least of all then would He allow 'His beloved Son' who had died for His sake and for love of His children, in agreement with God's own 'choice' (Mark VIII 31f IX 4f)

to be blotted out for ever by Jesus' deliberate acceptance of 'the Way of the Cross' as the divine way. If Jesus was right in this faith, that settles the matter. If Jesus was wrong, there was no such 'God' to 'raise' Jesus: his whole life and 'teaching' were founded on an illusion, no less than his death. But, as St. Paul repeats so often, if 'God was in Christ', then it was God's act of supreme generosity and love not to spare His son but to 'give him' to and for his creature and child man: so there is nothing in the universe that can "cut us off from God's love which came to us in Christ Jesus our Lord" (^{Rom} Rev. VIII 14-39).

The real place to look for evidence of 'the risen Christ' is in the new release of creative spirit 'energising' in his followers to produce his own 'likeness' in them. That is the only view compatible with the original 'Gospel' of Jesus, and with the greatest and most understanding of all his interpreters. And that is what happened to Paul himself. (I Cor. XV 8 with Acts IX 1f and XXII 4f, repeated in Acts XXVI 12f).

The synoptic records fully bear out these conclusions. Jesus himself wrote nothing down. Nor is there any indication that he made any attempt to get anything written down by anyone else during his life time. He relied solely on the impact of his own personality and convictions - on what he was, stripped of everything but that one essential. And yet consider 'what manner of men' these were to whom he entrusted himself, his God and his 'Gospel'. Happily, Mark's (and presumably Peter's) straightforward frankness has survived the corrections of shocked piety ^{by} which Matthew and Luke concealed the human and endearing frailties and simple-mindedness of

the original disciples. "And Jesus said to them: If you can't understand a parable like this, how will you ever understand any parable?" (Mark IV 10 13)

"And he said to them: Why don't you give them food? And they said: Do you expect us to go and buy 200 pennyworth of bread from the villages round here to feed them with?" (Mark VI 37). "They were so stupid that they missed the whole significance of the feeding of the crowds" (Mark VI 52. In Matthew this becomes 'And they worshipped him saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God': Luke omits Mark's comment altogether). "And Jesus said: Be on your guard against the leaven of the Pharisees. And the disciples whispered to each other. He must be referring to our having forgotten to bring any bread with us. And Jesus said: What do you mean? Are you really as dull minded as all that? - like the people in Isaiah who have eyes and can't see, and ears and can't listen? Are you still incapable of understanding what I say?" (Mark VIII 14f). "And Peter took Jesus aside and said: Jesus, you really must not say things like that. And Jesus looked round at the disciples who were watching, and said to Peter: Out of my sight - Tempter". - (Mark VIII 31, 32: of Matt. IV 8-10).

"As they walked on towards Jerusalem Jesus was explaining to the disciples that just because he was the Messiah he would shortly fall into the hands of his opponents who would put him to death ... And when they were later sitting in the house, Jesus asked them: What were you quarrelling about on the road? And they remained silent; for they had been disputing which of them was the most important" (Mark VIII 31f & IX 30f). "Some parents brought their babies for Jesus to bless. The disciples told them to go away. When Jesus saw this he was indignant" (omitted by Matt. and Luke).

"And Jesus looked at the disciples and said: How hard it is for anyone who is rich to accept 'the Reign of God'. The disciples were dumbfounded: If that is so, they said, who can be saved?" (Mark X 23f). "And Jesus took the Twelve aside and said to them: This Messiah of yours is now going to be arrested, ridiculed, spat on, scourged, and put to death.. And James and John came and asked him for the two highest places of honour in the Messianic Kingdom. The others, when they heard it, were furious". (Mark X 32f). (Matthew shifts the blame to the Mother. Luke omits altogether). "A woman came in with a vase of precious ointment. She broke the vase and poured the ointment over his head. The disciples were indignant: What a wicked waste, they said" (Mark XIV 3f) "And Peter said: Though everyone else may fail you, I never will. And Jesus said: This very night you will say you don't even know me. And Peter protested indignantly: Even if I have to die with you, I will never repudiate you. All the others said the same ... And they all forsook him and ran away". (Mark XIV 27-31, 50). "And he said to them: Please wait here and keep watch while I go and pray. And he fell on his knees and begged that he might not have to drink this cup of suffering. And he came back and found them asleep... and he came back again to find them asleep... And Peter began to curse and swear that he had never set eyes on Jesus" (Mark XIV 27f). So these were the men, simple peasants mostly, who were Jesus' followers. And yet he used no other method than to invite them to accompany him everywhere, as intimate companions, explaining, 'teaching', 'educating', with all the patience, simplicity, persuasiveness and friendliness so characteristic of him.

Nor were they 'miraculously' changed after Jesus' death. We can

hardly imagine Jesus 'casting lots' to ascertain whom the Holy Spirit wanted them to choose in place of Judas! (Acts I 26). In spite of the lesson of Luke IX 51, Peter has no hesitation in consigning Annanias and Sapphira to death for an act of 'deception' in keeping back part of their own property (Acts V). And this is how Peter 'loves' his opponent Simon Magus: "May your money perish and you with it, you mass of poisonous evil" (Acts VIII 18f; cf XIII 8f). This at least is how they are presented in the Jerusalem tradition of early Acts, the purpose of which is to present Peter as the leader of the Church and the successor of Jesus. Needless to say, the point of all these examples is not in the least to belittle the disciples: only to make plain what kind of men these were - according to the records themselves - to whose character and memories and understanding Jesus wholly committed himself and his message; and how he dealt with them.

It was the memories of these men - what they recollected of the doings and sayings of Jesus, as they understood and interpreted them - that eventually formed the basis of the written records. But they too (so far as we know) wrote nothing down themselves. Nor was there any attempt to present a connected life-story of Jesus, even of the three years of his 'ministry'. "Mark accompanied Peter as his interpreter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but made no attempt to give a connected account of what the Lord had said": such is the most reliable report of the earliest surviving tradition about the origin of the Gospels. Their concern was not in the least that of the modern historian - the idea and methods of such history had not yet even been conceived - but to 'save' men by 'the preaching of the Gospel': the process so vividly described in

the Letters of St. Paul. The 'historical process' meant to them the working out of 'the purpose of the Living God' which was the dominant theme of the Old Testament. With this, they were concerned in the most intimate possible way; for to them the birth, life and death of Jesus of Nazareth was the culmination of that purpose. He was the 'Messiah': the prophet-teacher, Teacher-Lord who was to be sent by God to inaugurate the new era known to them as 'the Reign of God'. This is the origin of the 'proof-texts' which seem to us so oddly appealed to by all the New Testament writers in order to demonstrate that Jesus was 'the Anointed' or 'Chosen One' (Messiah, Christos) whose 'advent' had been promised again and again in the sacred 'revelation of God's purpose' (the Old Testament); "proving from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah)" (Iakexiv. 34).

The surprising and unique thing about 'Jesus the Christ' was, for them, the nature of his Messiahship: he was 'the Messiah who ended on the Cross'; this was the entirely new and unexpected revelation of the nature and purpose of God. All the activities of the followers of Jesus, and of the early Churches, were concentrated on 'conversion': on persuading everyone whom they could reach, to accept 'the faith', to join the community of believers (the Church), and to live 'the new life' in accordance with - and made possible by - the life and teaching and crucifixion of 'Jesus the Christ'. Their 'preaching' was 'the proclamation' of this 'gospel', the 'good news about and from God'. The new 'believer', the 'convert' who accepted 'the faith' was first baptised, as a public act of recognition of his acceptance as a member of the Christian Community; he was then given a course of 'instruction' and 'education' in 'what the faith was': 'what it

meant to be a Christian'. This was the answer to the question: 'What shall I do to be saved?' (Acts *passim*). Of course, since 'Jesus of Galilee' was the Messiah, this inevitably included an understanding of "what Jesus had said and done". All that could be remembered of what Jesus had said and done thus lay at the heart of both the 'preaching' and 'instruction'; but it cannot be too often repeated that the ultimate aim was an entirely practical one: 'conversion' to 'the faith' and 'the new life in Christ'.

The writing of our Gospel records, and the preservation of these records together with the 'Letters' of St. Paul 'to the Churches', was the eventual outcome of these activities. After the crucifixion and the 'resurrection appearances', the original Jewish Christian community of 'believers' made Jerusalem their head-quarters. Their leader was Peter, and the two 'pillars of the community' were Peter and James, the brother of Jesus. Most of 'the Apostles' and other 'eyewitnesses' were scattered - partly by persecution and partly by the belief that Jesus had 'commanded' them to 'spread the gospel' ('the Mission to the Gentiles'); and finally by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This led them to visit or settle in the various key-centres of the Roman empire, preaching, teaching and instructing converts very much as Peter is described by Papias as doing ^(in the passage quoted above.)

The application of their recollections of 'what Jesus had said and done', to the current problems and needs of these new community centres of believers ('Churches') was naturally the most important thing. At some stage, both such 'sayings' (logia) and the relevant 'events', 'according to' the visiting authority would no doubt have been collected, and written down so as to ensure their accurate transmission. Judging by our earliest gospel, Mark,

these would consist of sayings ('and he said'), sometimes reported without a context or in different contexts, or with only enough incident-context to explain the sayings; or of collections of parables; or of a few incidents illustrating some crucial situation, such as the conflict with the orthodox religious authorities. So long as the authoritative 'eyewitnesses' were alive and could be appealed to, there would be no urgent need to make formal or official collections of such material. But when they were all dead, such a record would become an imperative need. It was then no doubt that important Church centres made an attempt to record permanently the recollections and 'teachings' of any 'authority' who had visited that centre, and to put them into some sort of order. It is no doubt these latter that Luke refers to at the beginning of his Gospel: "Since a number of writers have attempted to make an orderly narrative of the agreed facts about our religion exactly as they were passed on to us by the original eyewitnesses who devoted themselves to the service of 'the gospel'; and since I have myself studied them all carefully from first to last, I have decided to compose my own ordered account of them, in order that your Excellency may know the reliable facts about what you have been told" (Luke I 1f). It is noticeable that Luke claims to be acquainted with all these written accounts, but is not satisfied with any of them. One cause of this dissatisfaction may have been that none of them included the Jerusalem tradition that formed his own special source (L). The only other sources that Luke treats with full respect are Mark, and a collection of 'sayings of the Lord' (Logia) which Matthew also uses. The latter, generally referred to as 'Q' survives only in their quotations. The fact that Luke was dissatisfied with all the

available written sources, though he was not himself either an 'eyewitness' or an 'apostle', suggests that none of them can have been written by such an authority. Mark was not an 'apostle' either; but tradition had it that his story was based on St. Peter himself. Luke therefore makes Mark the basis for his own narrative. But Mark gives almost no details of the 'teaching' (Jesus' 'gospel'): it therefore needed supplementing in this respect, and Luke has recourse to Q and to L. Matthew follows Mark closely and often in more detail; he uses Q: and he also incorporates a source of his own (M), which probably represents one of the more important local Church traditions (corresponding to L), to which reference has been made.

How far the earlier sources may have been edited, we have no means of knowing. But there is evidence of a duplicate account having been inserted into the middle of Mark. For at Mark VI 45 Jesus asks his disciples to row across the Lake to Bethsaida, while he remains behind (cf. John VI). But they do not reach Bethsaida until Mark VIII 22. In this intervening section there are three incidents which are duplicates of Mark's earlier narrative: a storm, a 'miraculous feeding' in the wilderness, and a conflict with the Pharisees. The 'Insertion' itself has some remarkable characteristics. For example, in the account of the storm, Matthew inserts the incident of Jesus passing the disciples in his 'resurrection' form (like an apparition, cf. Luke XXIV 36-8), and of Peter trying to 'walk on the water', being almost 'lost' through the failure of his faith, and being saved by Jesus - at which "they worshipped him saying of a truth thou art the Son of God" (an M version which contradicts Mark's ending: cf. Matt. XIV 22-33 with Mark VI 45 52). Matthew's account in fact suggests an 'allegoric' meaning

in the well known Jewish 'midrash' form. The 'Mission to the Gentiles' is then foreshadowed (Mark VII 24-31 with Matt. XV 21f) by a visit of Jesus to the 'Gentile territory' of Tyre and Sidon, followed by the curing of a 'Gentile' girl, and the 'opening of eyes and ears' - in short it is a 'mission to the Gentiles'. The conflict with the religious leaders from Jerusalem (Mark VII) raises another interesting problem: it turns on the 'clean - unclean' food controversy. But as we have already seen, the Jerusalem-Acts tradition records that the 'cleanness' issue was first revealed to Peter at Joppa in a dream (Acts X 10-16): "What God has made 'clean' you must not regard as unclean"; and so that there should be no mistake the dream was repeated 'three times' (a 'sacred' number). Now Mark VII 10 (found in Mark only) comments: "In saying this Jesus made all kinds of food clean"; but if so Peter's dream at Joppa was superfluous - certainly not the new 'revelation' it is presented as being in Acts. The particular point at issue in Mark VII 1f has a Q parallel, but in another context (Luke XI 37f Matt XXIII 25f). The section also contains an account of the miraculous healing of a deaf-mute, which, like the similar story of the blind man in Mark XXIII, is unique in being omitted by both Luke and Matthew. The only other passage entirely omitted by both Luke and Matthew is the parable of the seed (Mark IV 26f).

We now come to the most remarkable point: the entire section from Mark VII 1 to Mark VIII 26 is omitted en bloc by Luke. The parallel to the dispute with the leaders about the signs of the times (Mark VIII, 11f) is found in another context in Luke (XI 16f); it is evidently a 'Q' passage, as Matthew repeats it in both its Marcan and its Lucan versions

(Matt. XVI 1f and XII 38f). But since Luke elsewhere follows Mark's narrative throughout, and generally in greater detail than Matthew, it is only reasonable to suppose either that it was not in Luke's copy, or that Luke recognised it as a duplication. In view of Luke's uncritical attitude to his sources the former seems more likely to be ^{the} true explanation.

We conclude that our records must have passed through at least three stages: Firstly, the recollections and understanding and interpretations of the 'eye witness' authority (or authorities) who founded and visited the local Church-centre. Secondly, the memories, interpretations and adaptations of the local leaders, and thirdly the similar limitations of the author of the written gospel. We cannot check the second of the two processes as we know nothing about the persons concerned. But the Gospel writer and his sources can be treated like all historical records. Having four Gospels we can, by comparing them, get to know something both of the original followers of Jesus, and of the 'minds' of the Gospel writers themselves. The former has already been briefly indicated. We can now consider, as briefly, the nature and qualifications of the writers of our Gospels.

MARK

Mark has a simple, elementary style; for example, nearly every sentence in the early chapters begins with 'and' (Kai). In spite of this, the narrative itself has the vividness of an eye witness, and the portrait of the central figure is strikingly bold and impressive. The declared purpose of the Gospel is to present Jesus as 'the Messiah' (Christ). And the climax of the story was the Crucifixion. This is what had happened.

Therefore if Jesus was the Messiah, then the 'Gospel' must be the gospel of the crucified Messiah - something hitherto unimagined. Jesus had not only set out on his public career as the Messiah: he had both foreseen that this involved his death on the Cross, but he had deliberately accepted it as 'God's way' for the Messiah. This controls Mark's whole presentation of the story. It opens abruptly with "This is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah" (Mark I 1). ^{It} This is immediately followed by the 'call' to Messiahship, and then Jesus goes away into the solitude of the Judean 'wilderness' to examine the current conceptions as possible alternatives open to the Messiah, and then decide on his own course in the light of the nature of God as he knew Him. This came to be called 'the Temptation', i.e. the great Testing. As soon as Herod ended John the Baptist's career as the prophet of the approaching 'Reign of God', Jesus began his own public ministry, with the announcement that the Reign of God had now arrived ($\epsilon\tau\eta\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\theta\eta$). ^{778 KEV} His extraordinary gift for healing was a demonstration of this; and therefore although his activities as healer-Messiah caused him acute embarrassment, he continued to perform them. His next step was to select from his followers and friends a more intimate group of 'twelve' disciples to be the nucleus of the new 'Chosen People'. His intention in choosing them was to prepare them to understand and accept his conception of Messiahship. So from this time on they never left his side. His claims soon brought him into conflict with the orthodox religious and political leaders to whom they were blasphemous. To make his 'new teaching' more intelligible ^{to the crowds} Jesus now adopted the familiar parable form ('the parables of the Kingdom'), 'explaining everything fully

to the Twelve in private' (*Mk IV. 33-4*). The death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod warned Jesus that the crisis of his own career was fast approaching; he therefore took his disciples away from the crowds into the 'pagan' area of Tyre and Sidon where he could be alone with them. At Caesarea Philippi he asked them directly who they believed him to be. When Peter, as their spokesman, replied that they were now convinced he was the Messiah, Jesus immediately prepared for his final journey to Jerusalem where he intended openly to challenge the authorities with his claim to Messiahship. 'And from that time on' began to impress on the Disciples that he was deliberately going, as Messiah, to what he knew would be his death. It was now his whole preoccupation, so he kept his journey through Galilee to Judea secret. But as soon as he crossed the ^{into Judea} border, everything he did and said became a public claim to Messiahship. Arrived at Jerusalem, he threw down one public challenge after another to the authorities on his right to act as the Messiah. This soon led to his arrest. At his trial Jesus again compelled the High Priest to restrict the charges to his claim to be Messiah. And when Pilate had been persuaded to sentence Jesus to death, the charge nailed to his Cross was this claim alone. In spite of all Jesus' warnings, the strain was too great for the Twelve: 'they all forsook him and fled'.

But two days later the women followers who came to embalm his body found the tomb empty and were met by an 'angel' who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead; and that the 'resurrected' and 'glorified' Messiah would meet them in Galilee. At this point Mark's narrative abruptly ends.

Among other remarkable characteristics of the Gospel are the

extraordinary humanity of the portrait of Jesus, and the unfailing honesty with which the weaknesses of his 'disciples' are admitted throughout.

Q

The 'Q' source seems to have consisted almost entirely of examples of Jesus' 'gospel message'. Nothing is known of the author of the Collection. But it contains material of the very first importance, including a full account of 'the Temptation' (reproduced by Luke and Matthew in the same words); the original 'Sermon on the Mount'; John the Baptist's challenge to Jesus; and the Parable of the Talents.

LUKE

Of Luke little needs to be added to what has already been said. He is a non-Jewish convert writing for his fellow 'Gentile' converts. He follows whatever source he has chosen to use uncritically, exactly as it comes to him; the value of his record therefore depends on the source he is following. He is unimaginative and literal minded: e.g. the well known Rabbinic image of the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit becomes an actual dove; the story of Jesus closes with an ascension (unrecorded elsewhere) which is a literal ascent into the clouds; the 'inspiration' of the disciples at 'Pentecost' with the spirit is accompanied by a literal wind and literal flames of fire: Jesus convinces the disciples that he is not 'a ghost' after his resurrection by eating some of their boiled fish. But Luke is aware, as the other recorders are not, of the historical setting, and is careful to indicate the imperial context. Both he and Matthew tend to remove references in Mark which they consider disrespectful to Jesus or

the Twelve. His Jerusalem tradition (L) contains some extremely valuable and original matter, which supplements the Q tradition.

MATTHEW

The Gospel 'according to Matthew' goes to an opposite extreme in the recording and interpretation of his source material. Have we any clue to the provenance of the Gospel? If Luke's birth stories clearly indicate his source, perhaps Matthew's birth-stories may do the same. These, unlike the Judean stories of Luke, are concerned solely with 'the Wise Men of the East' - the famous 'Magi', who under one name or another are central figures in all the religious literature of Mesopotamia and Persia and Syria. Three is the sacred number familiar to everyone acquainted with early mythology. It has seldom been openly recognised that the story of the three 'magi' takes for granted a belief in astrology. Gold, incense and myrrh were the sacred 'mana' objects so familiar and essential in the Egyptian sacred rite of embalming, as well as throughout Syria and Persia; in short, they are typical symbols - objects of this form of worship. So when we examine Matthew's birth stories we find that they exactly reflect the form of astrological worship which prevailed so long throughout the East and Near-East. There is no mention in the text of the 'We three kings of Orient are' imported into the text by careless reading and preconceptions: Matthew calls them 'magoi' - (Latin 'magi'): priests who were experts in divination according to the stars.

According to Matthew their astrological calculations reveal to them a star which points to the birth of a sacred King-priest (another familiar figure in all these religions). Following the course of this

special star, they find it coming to a stand at a particular point over a manger in Bethlehem. This convinced them (in accordance with their same tradition) that the new-born infant lying in the stable was an embodiment of the divine powers. Such beliefs were of course entirely alien to orthodox Judaism. Indeed, when Herod asked the Jewish authorities to inform him where the Jewish Messiah was to be born, the Scribes, ^(Scholars) at once consulted the Old Testament (Micah V 2: Midrash). The magi are divinely warned not to inform Herod, by that universal 'oracle': the dream. This whole legend, therefore, points very clearly to the provenance of the Gospel as the areas north of Palestine, (such as Syria) where we know that there were Jewish and Christian community centres. The writer as good as signs the record when he refers to: "Every scribe who has become a disciple" and who is "like a householder who brings out his store of treasures both old and new". (Matt. XIII 5). This fits the author of the Gospel exactly: he was presumably a scribe in a Jewish community north of Palestine who was a convert to Christianity. The convert is notoriously apt to be the most aggressive critic of the religion he has just left. As we see especially in Matthew XXIII, the author of this Gospel collects every criticism of the contemporary Judaism that he can find - including those of John the Baptist - and gathers them into one terrific indictment which he puts into the mouth of Jesus! His records bear other characteristic marks of the scribe. We know from St. Paul's letters that in the attempt to persuade the Jews that Jesus was their promised Messiah, one of the most important arguments was 'proof-texts' from the Old Testament. These were texts, taken out of their context, and interpreted as divinely inspired prophecies of the signs of the

fulfilment of God's purpose which would occur at the appearance of the long-expected Messiah. The use of such proof-texts in connection with the appearance of the Messiah was the accepted practice. What is in dispute is simply who is the Messiah? -- This is the burden of all the early scenes of Acts in Jerusalem and Judea (e.g. Acts ii 22f, III 13f, IV 18, 24f; V 30f 42; VII 53; IX 22; X 42; XIII 32f, etc; and St. Paul's Letters passim). A collection of these proof-texts was made for the use of the Christian Church, and St. Paul uses it freely. Matthew appeals to them on every possible 'critical' occasion in Jesus' career.

A third and unique characteristic of the Gospel is the reorganising of the entire material in sections as a new Christian Torah: Part I groups the new 'message' ('commandments' - Torah) round the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. V 7). Part II is a missionary Handbook containing both examples from Jesus' career and 'instructions' (Matt. VIII - XI 1). Part III is concerned with the new revelation about 'The Kingdom' or 'Reign of God'; it is presented as a 'mystery': i.e. a 'revelation' which is hidden from outsiders but made plain to 'the elect' (initiates) and which ensures 'salvation'. (Matt. XII 2 - XIII 52). Part IV is a Handbook on Church Administration (Matt. XIII 50 - XVIII 35) - The Value of Unity; relations between members, etc.) Part V takes up the theme of the Divine Judgement: present and to come (Matt XIX 1 - XXV 46). Part VI follows the Passion Story as recorded by Mark. A final major characteristic of Matthew's record is the unusual emphasis laid on 'eschatology'. This had become an obsession among certain sects but was not characteristic of orthodox Judaism. It is important to distinguish

clearly between such orthodox texts as Daniel, and books like the extravagant 'Similitudes of Enoch). Daniel used symbolism common throughout the Near-East, to picture the great worldly empires under the forms of monstrous animals - they are the 'brute' empires based on the will to power; in contrast 'the Chosen People' are imaged in the form of a 'human' being ('Son of man'): i.e. they represent true humanity as it will eventually emerge when God's purpose is fulfilled. The end of the brutal struggle of these empires for power is represented by Daniel as brought about by a divine judgement, which also reserves the future for the new humanity. Daniel's eschatology is therefore fully in line with the general prophetic development in the Old Testament, and is merely expressed in the more imaginative symbolism of traditional Eastern mythology. 'The Son of Man' in Daniel is not a personal Messiah, but the loyal members of the Chosen People who have remained faithful to God's purpose all through 'the times of Trial'. It is necessary to stress this, as the weight of Dr. Schweitzer's great personality and reputation has gone to support a very misleading and one-sided interpretation of the supposed eschatology of Jesus, which he carries to an extreme with typical German thoroughness. When we examine the evidence on which Dr. Schweitzer relies we find it is almost entirely confined to Matthew's Gospel. The only other ground for this error is Mark XIII, which scholars are now agreed to regard as a 'leaflet' circulated to the Christian Communities in Judea when the fall of Jerusalem was imminent. Even so the references are all to the 'Dooms' and 'Judgments' found in various contexts in the Old Testament prophets; and the predicted 'end of the world' which follows closely on the Fall of Jerusalem

and the wars connected with it (A.D. 70) are in the same tradition. Otherwise the passages recorded by both Mark and Q imply that there will be a divine 'Judgment'; that it will certainly occur in the lifetime of the bystanders; and that it will take them all by surprise. All three synoptic gospels repeat in different but emphatic phrases, that at his Trial Jesus deliberately refused to answer any charge but that of his claim to Messiahship and that he added that his death was immediately connected with the coming of God's Reign ~~×~~ "with power". — So well was this remembered that it was interpreted by the early Church as an almost immediate 'return' of Jesus as Messiah to ~~and~~ the present world order (The 'parousia') which survives in St. Paul's earliest letters (Thess. I and II); and in the reference to 'The Twelve' as sitting on twelve thrones and acting as 'Judges' of 'the Twelve Tribes of Israel' (Luke XXII 30, Matt. XIX 28 — a Q passage) — and this in spite of Jesus' recorded comment in Mark X 35-45! — Nothing could more clearly indicate the outlook that still dominated the minds of the early disciples.

We can now put Matthew's emphasis into perspective. 'M' alone records 'the Outer darkness', and the parables of the Unmerciful Servant (XVIII 37), the three 'Last Judgment' parables of Chapter XIII, the Foolish Virgins (XXV 1f) and the Sheep and the Goats (XXV 31f). Matthew's 'gospel' thus leaves us with a clear enough picture of its author. His bias as a 'scribe' stands out clearly in his puzzled comment on the 'Baptism' (Matt. III 14-15); — it was a 'baptism' of repentance for the remission of sins'; then why should the 'sinless' Jesus come to be baptised?

J.B.: Why do you come to me? I need to be baptised by you.

Jesus: We must be careful to fulfil all the divine ordinances (dikaiosune was, to the orthodox, primarily a scrupulous fulfilment of the Torah).

Similarly the gospel concludes with instructions from Jesus to go out into the Roman Empire (the Gentile Mission) *baptising them into the name of the Trinity, and teaching them to observe strictly all the 'commands' I have given you".

Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount is studded with 'M' references to the 'Gospel teaching' as a new Torah, and the strict fulfilment of its regulations as the essential condition of becoming a member of the new Chosen People. For "I did not come to supersede 'the Law and the Prophets,' but to fulfil them. Indeed, unless your scrupulous observance of them exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt V 17-20; 'M'). (Unfortunately Paul was no longer there to comment!) And the leaders of the new Chosen People are commissioned by Jesus to make further regulations which are absolutely binding (XVI 7, XVIII 15f).

A comparison of this 'M' source with 'L' brings the qualities, outlook and limitations of the two authors into clear relief. To take only one example: Luke's account of the birth and childhood of Jesus is as remote from that of Matthew as are the two accounts of the Resurrection sequel. All Luke's Jerusalem 'birth-stories' are typical of the first Jerusalem Jewish-Christian tradition, the 'hymns' are a mosaic of Old Testament texts and reflect the simple faith of the ordinary 'pious' Jewish home ('the common people'). The parents of John the Baptist are

Temple servants, who "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless". Divine guidance is given by visible angels and dreams. The 'revelation' of the divine birth comes not to 'wise men from the East' but to simple Judean shepherds. Jesus' circumcision and 'confirmation' are carried out in accordance with orthodox Jewish tradition. Later the same source betrays itself in that curious ending to the parable of Lazarus: "But Abraham said: They have 'Moses and the Prophets' (the Old Testament): let them hear them. And Dives said: Nay father Abraham, but if one go to them from the dead they will repent. And Abraham answered: If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rises from the dead". (Luke XVI 22-31; of also XIII 16 and XII 9, 23-28). These passages are all the more remarkable in that Luke was a Gentile convert interested mainly in the Gentile 'Mission'. He is, as usual, simply repeating his source just as it comes to him.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL

The Fourth Gospel is a challenge to Mark and the whole 'historical tradition' he stood for; a challenge as radical as that of early Acts to St. Paul. It never mentions Mark (neither do Luke and Matthew) but it sets out to refute him point by point. The writer's own purpose, which is the reason for this opposition, is ^{stated} ~~set out~~ with his characteristic clarity in the opening sentences of his gospel (John I 1f). Jesus was the fully conscious and complete embodiment of the Divine 'Wisdom' (Old Testament), the Creative 'Word' (Gen. I.1). (~~The~~ 'Reason' to the Greeks; ~~and the~~ 'Revelation' or 'Light' to the mystery religions). This Creative Power, Intelligence and Wisdom that eternally shared the mind, life, and creative power of God, and

was therefore one aspect and being of the full Divinity, had temporarily assumed a human form and body as the historic Jesus. It is true that Jesus was really embodied ('incarnate') in order to effect, in his person, the will and purpose of God at the supreme crisis of history. He therefore felt and acted through his body. But there the limits of the 'incarnation' ended. The Logos did not 'empty' himself (as in *Philippians*); his divine insight was never for a moment clouded; his divine authority and power never faltered or lost control of any situation. History, as the divine revelation of the Old Testament had so impressively asserted, was a divine Drama of Redemption: the redemption of man from the slavery to sin and evil into which man had so helplessly fallen. At the crisis of this drama, the Logos Himself had assumed the leading role as protagonist on the stage; he knew in advance his entire 'part' as an actor, from the first words and actions to the last; just as the leading actor knows from the beginning every word and situation of the play in which he is acting. And here the divine 'author' and actor were one. If that is the case, the Jesus of Mark becomes incredible. In the earlier tradition (Mark, Q, Matthew, Luke) Jesus is 'called' to Messiahship by a special 'revelation' after his baptism ("He saw Heaven opening..and a voice said .." Mark I 10-11); but the Logos must always have possessed this unclouded divine insight;— he could not have had to acquire it when he was 30 years old! Therefore the 'revelation' was not to him at all, but a 'sign' (a miraculous portent) to John the Baptist who was watching (John I 31-34). In the synoptic tradition, the 'revelation' of Jesus Messiahship was made to his followers at the climax of his career and is the prelude to his death; but according to John the whole purpose of the Incarnation was that 'the Light of the World' should from the

first be seen shining, with the 'glory' of the old 'shekinah' (Is. VI 1-3) through the new 'tabernacle' of the Logos - his body. Every act and word of Jesus was a 'sign' (sēmeion - a supernatural revelation), a visible manifestation of the Logos in this human form. The plainest assertion of this authority was the 'cleansing' of the old Temple: this was therefore the first public act of the Messiah (John II 13f), not the last as in Mark. The synoptic tradition recorded a 'Temptation' or 'Testing' immediately after the Call ("He was in the wilderness 40 days, tempted of the devil", Mark I 13 and Q); but how could the Logos be tempted? - So John omits it. The Marcan tradition recorded a 'Transfiguration'; but in 'John' the transfiguring light had always shone through the bodily 'dwelling' of the Logos; - it was always a 'sign'; so the special Transformation is omitted. That the Christ could not feel hunger or pain or weariness was a heresy of the docetists, (with a background of Stoicism). The writer of the Gospel therefore admits that Christ could feel bodily hunger and weariness; but only to insist that this does not mean he was ever overcome by, or at the mercy of, such feelings: when Jesus sat down at the well of Sychar he was 'tired and thirsty', and asked for a drink and was offered one - but he never drank it: the divine impulse to give the 'living water' - the spiritual drink - drove out the physical thirst. The disciples returned with food but he never tasted it. 'Why is this? exclaimed the disciples; has anyone given him food?'. - But no: "My food and drink is to do the will of Him who sent me into the world" (John IV). So too the ^{Logos-}Christ might weep, but they were tears of indignation at human folly and blindness.* (John XI 33f).

* Ἐπεβριμώσατο - ver 33, 38;

↳ this always involves indignation. And Jesus is not roused; he rouses himself: ἐτάρξατο ἑαυτὸν

There could of course have been no 'agony in the Garden' or prayer that the cup might be removed. According to this Gospel (John XII 27) Jesus had already, when the Hellenists were introduced to him, quoted the Psalm behind Mark: "My soul is disquieted within me", and had continued: "What then shall I say? Father save me from this hour? (Mark XIV 23-36). No: it was not this that brought me to this hour! What I do say is: Father, glorify Thy name". Immediately a voice replies: "I have glorified it and will glorify it again" - words intended to convince the bystanders of Jesus' divine mission (cf John XII 23-30) with Mark XIV 32-39). Again, if at the Last Supper Jesus was 'troubled' it was (according to John) solely by the fact of Judas' betrayal of him; and he adds immediately: "Let not your hearts be 'troubled'. You believe in God; trust also in me.. In this world you will no doubt meet with 'trouble'; but take courage, I have overcome the world" (John XIV, 1, 23). After this Jesus goes out to the garden, "fully aware of everything that was to happen to him", serenely master of the situation and of himself: "Peace is what I give you - my peace" (XIV 27). It was not Jesus who "fell on his knees" (Mark XIV 35), but the guards who had come to arrest him and who were struck down by the calm majesty of his bearing (John XVIII, 4 - 7). The disciples did not "forsake" Jesus in a panic; it was Jesus who secured their freedom to leave (XVIII, 8, 9). If on the Cross Jesus says 'I am thirsty', it is only because the words belong to the 'part' which God has composed for him to play (XIX 28). His last words were not - how could they be - "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?", but 'tetelestai': 'I have played the part assigned me, to the very end, and now I can leave the stage': he is writing 'finis' to the last act of this divine drama.. Such, according to this

Gospel, was the true story of the 'incarnate Logos', whose physical form moved on earth but whose 'spirit' was in ceaseless and perfect contact with 'the Father who sent me'; with whom he was always in full and unbroken communion. What the writer of the Fourth Gospel is saying with great courage, clarity and thoroughness, is that there can be no compromise with Mark's historical and human Jesus. The whole story of a 'divine saviour' and 'embodiment of God' must have been quite otherwise, and so it must be rewritten from beginning to end. In making this bold challenge he *was deliberately compelling* compels the reader to a choice.

That such an attempt should have been made is, in itself, a fact of extraordinary interest. The earliest 'eyewitness' account tells of a carpenter's son from a small village in Galilee who became a penniless wandering preacher, known as the friend of the 'outcasts'; he had no political influence; he was repudiated by all the religious leaders of his own people; he had no formal education (John V 15); his followers were as poor and uninfluential as himself - ordinary fishermen and the like ^{and} of very limited understanding. He claimed that he was the Messiah - the personal embodiment of the purpose of God which, according to the sacred scriptures of his own race, was the clue to the whole of human history and was to come to a climax in a dynamic act of the Creative Spirit which would transform the world and lift humanity on to a new plane. With nothing to recommend him but himself, Jesus did - by the sheer quality of his own personality, of the nature of the God he taught men to believe in, and his personal 'loving-kindness' - persuade the intimate friends who knew him best that this 'good news' was true! This was surprising enough but it was not all. In the end his claim to Messiahship had led to his being

arrested, condemned to death and crucified. A Messiah of God who ended his life on the gallows! No wonder his friends were too shocked and bewildered to understand. It was a disaster beyond recovery: what else could it be? In fact the exact opposite happened: it was their conviction of his Messiahship which reasserted itself to such effect that they spent the rest of their lives in an effort to convince the world that it was the simple truth. 'God was in Christ' not only as he lived and taught, but most of all when he chose to die for the truth he had lived by. They were quite convinced that God, the Creative Spirit who had been working and speaking in him all his life, was still working and speaking through him though he was no longer present in human form. That is how the portrait of Jesus they had lived with and remembered came to be recorded in our synoptic gospels. It is a story that strains belief; and yet it is what actually happened.

And now, some sixty years after the crucifixion - hardly a man's lifetime - a leader (apparently) of the Christian community in Ephesus, reflecting on two generations of such experience, writes a new gospel in order to express the completeness of his conviction that this crucified Galilean peasant was the Logos of God, the Supreme Wisdom, the very Light of Truth, the divine source of all life, the Ultimate Creative Power, the embodied purpose of God! (John I 1f). The whole Gospel is organised round the great annual Jewish sacred festivals, in order to demonstrate from every possible point of view that Jesus was the fulfilment of everything that God had promised and foreshadowed in the institution of these festivals.

At the first Passover feast of Jesus' ministry, the Temple - which was the centre of worship at which the 'shekinah' (the visible glory

of the invisible God) came down to man and 'revealed' itself to him and made contact with him - is now superseded by the living centre and focus of that 'indwelling glory' in which the divine and the human most truly and most fully met: the person of Jesus Christ. He becomes the true 'passover': that 'saving' act of God which 'redeemed' His People from slavery and death. (John II 13 - IV 40). The Feast of Pentecost, which was a celebration of the first giving of the divine 'Law' to the Chosen People, stands pointing to the perfect authentic and final revelation of the mind and will of God for man (John V). The second Passover, in Galilee, deals with its aspects as the Feast which celebrates life through sacrifice and death: the paschal lamb, the Lamb of God, fulfilled in Jesus as the real and immortal 'Bread (food) of Life'. (John VI). The Feast of Tabernacles, at which the water of the well of Siloam was poured out to represent and celebrate the promised outpouring of the Spirit, finds its fulfilment in the true 'water of Life' which becomes in those who drink it a never failing fountain of 'life for evermore'. The symbolic lights lit at the same feast point to the Light of Divine Truth that has driven out 'the Dark' and can never be quenched again. (John I 4-5, VII 1, IX 21). The Feast of Dedication, which celebrated the martyrs who had suffered and died for God and His People, speaks now of the greatest 'Martyr' of all - at once self-sacrifice and witness - who through his giving ^{of} himself on the Cross brought to men the Life that is stronger than death, embodied in the Christ who is himself 'the Resurrection and the Life' (John X 22 - XI 54). The third and last Passover of Jesus' ministry celebrates the true 'Lamb of God', who by his deliberate act of self-sacrifice gives himself,

incarnate in the bread and wine, to be the immortal food and drink by which human nature can be transformed into a vehicle of 'the Life Divine', and so share in the eternal and creative life of God (John XIII f). These are the themes of the whole gospel. Here, in Jesus, is a wholly new quality of life, like the water that Christ turns into wine (John II 1f); a creative life so powerful that it can restore to 'newness of life' even what has become corrupt in the decay of death (John XI). Not even St. Paul affirms more consistently the significance of Jesus' death on the Cross as the act in which the 'glory' or splendour of 'The Living God' was fully revealed 'once for all', and communicates itself to every individual who has once seen it in its true light.

Why should such men have come to feel and speak like this about a Galilean carpenter who never had anything to commend him but himself, the 'quality' of what he was and did and said, and who had ended his life rejected and forsaken on the gallows? And yet here is a writer of genius who is so deeply convinced of its truth that he is prepared to rewrite the whole traditional portrait of Jesus left by the first 'eyewitnesses. That (he says) was what they had seen; but it could not have been the reality; their eyes had (as they themselves admitted) been blind, their minds dull and stupid. (Mark III 21, IV 12, 13, 40, VI 2-6, VI 52, VII 17-18, VIII 13-21, 33, IX 28, 32, X 13-14, 23-27, Luke XVIII 34, Matt. XXVI 8, etc.) In reality (John says) behind this 'human' and 'earthly' appearance, there had really been enacted the Divine drama of Redemption in which the leading part was played by the Logos himself in the person of Jesus. This conception is crystallized by the writer in his key word ' . . . The

'semlin' is more than a mere sign or fingerpost or even symbol; it is itself an embodiment of what it 'represents' or stands for. To borrow an analogy from the writer himself, the human body or form of Jesus is like a tent: as the light inside it shines more and more brightly, the walls of the tent - 'the clouded earthly tabernacle' - become luminous and transparent, revealing the 'inner glory'. So the words and acts of the human Jesus become at each critical point a transparent medium through which there shines 'the Light of Life' (John I 9), for anyone who has eyes to see. (John I 32, 51 II 11, 18-23, III 2, 19, IV 54, V 35-6, VI 14, 26, 30-35, 60-3, IX 1-5, 16, 39 X 41, XI 4⁷, 47, XII 10, XIII 37-41, XIV 6-10, ~~XV 25-6~~ 20, 25² 25-6, XVII 1-8, 25).

Behind these convictions lay half a century of experience and reflection. Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and his insistence that his rejection and death were neither an accident nor a defeat but a necessary event in the working out of God's purpose for man, had compelled his followers to a decisive choice. After his death on the Cross there was no alternative but either to abandon belief in Jesus' Messiahship as having ended in disastrous failure; or to revise their whole conception of Messiahship, and therefore of 'the mind of God', in the light of his death. If they had taken the former view, we should have heard no more of their 'master': there would have been no new 'way' or 'faith', no Christian communities and no Gospels. The mere fact that there did come into vigorous life a new 'Chosen People' with a new faith and a new 'gospel', and that these survived to become the Christian Churches of Western civilization, is the clearest possible proof that belief in Jesus' Messiahship did survive

his death and did compel his followers to revise their whole religious outlook and beliefs.

THE PAULINE DEVELOPMENT.

Our knowledge of what happened is largely due to the 'conversion' to the new faith of a man of extraordinary religious genius, whose surviving 'letters' to the young struggling Christian communities are some of the most vivid and powerful documents ever written. — They are indeed not 'letters' so much as 'acts', which not only reflect but are a major influence in the intense struggle of the new 'faith' both to establish itself as a way of living, and to get to know itself for what it was. — St. Paul himself began his active life as a fanatical upholder of the most orthodox form of Judaism. — To the end he remained proud of his pure Jewish descent, and the orthodoxy of his upbringing (Philip. III 4-6, Acts XXII 3f, XXVI 5, 6). — This passionate adherence to the pure 'faith of the Fathers', and ^{of} the Torah as the special divine revelation to the 'Chosen People' engendered in him the temper of 'the Grand Inquisitor'. — That heresy was an evil to be stamped out by putting the false prophet to death was enjoined in the Torah itself (Deut. XIII 1-10, XVIII 20). — And what more blasphemous heresy could be imagined than the assertion that God's 'Chosen One, His 'Son', His 'Messiah' was an ignorant peasant preacher who had been rejected by all the religious leaders of 'the Chosen People' and had ended his career on the Cross — or as we might say, hanging like a common criminal on the gallows? — But some quality in that 'strange man upon the Cross, some quality in the faith and lives of his followers, must have secretly and deeply impressed Paul; for one day, as he pursued his mission of Grand Inquisitor, "breathing out fire and death", it

'struck' him by what he could only call a 'blinding' revelation that the belief he was so violently persecuting was true (Acts IX 3-9, 18-21). But if 'God was in Jesus', if Jesus was the Messiah, Paul's entire beliefs about God and His purpose would have to be radically transformed. God could no longer be adequately understood as the Law-giver, nor the Torah as His final self-revelation. For not only did Jesus preach a God who was ^{above} ~~above~~ all the great Lover and great Giver; but God must have been 'most' in Jesus when he chose the Cross. If so, the death of the Messiah on the Cross was involved in the whole purpose of God: in all God's creative activity, including human history: or as St. Paul himself put it, God had foreseen and chosen it as involved in His purpose, "before His creation of the World" ^(Eph. i. 8-9).

A 'crucified' Messiah was therefore the distinctive characteristic of the Christian faith: this was its 'good news' (gospel) (I Cor I 21-25).

"The Jews demand supernatural proofs, the Greeks demand rational proofs; but our gospel is that a Messiah on a Cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God". But to see this we have to "think like Christ" (I Cor II 16).

The key to God's nature was therefore sheer 'generosity': ('grace', χάρις gratia). God had so loved his world that He had 'given' His Son-Messiah to live and die for His child, man. And if God had not withheld even that 'gift', "how can there be anything in His universe that He will not give us as well?" (Romans VIII-32). But if 'God was in Christ', we must reconsider the whole story of Jesus and his 'ministry', see it with new eyes and a new understanding. St. Paul was not only a Jew; he lived in the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire, and having an unusually intelligent and enquiring mind he naturally expressed his 'philosophy' (gnôsis) of the new faith in

the terms current in that world and familiar to his educated hearers. We have recovered an understanding of these beliefs and can allow for their appeal in St. Paul's day. But what is of chief interest to us to-day is the way St. Paul's attitude towards these conceptions became transformed under the influence of the new faith - what he calls "the spirit of Messiah Jesus", and "the new man" to which it gives birth in the believer. Hitherto men had been 'subject' - like children before they come of age - if Jews, to the strictness of the Law; if Gentiles, to the invisible Elemental Spirits who peopled their universe. But now God had 'sent' His Son (pais) to be born as a Jew of a human mother, so that men might no longer be 'enslaved' to anyone or anything, but might enter on their full birth right as free children of God, knowing God as their 'Father', and heirs to all the resources of God's creative power. This is what is meant by God's 'generosity' as revealed in Jesus (Gal. IV 1-7, 19, V 6). It was a 'generosity' and 'fatherliness' that had loved and died for men 'while they were still sinful', unworthy, disobedient, blind (Romans V 5-8). Once men become aware of and respond to this 'grace', the living energy of God embodied in Christ sets them free from all ^{the} fear and evil that had held them at their mercy, and puts them in living contact with all the creative energies of God. (Romans VIII 2, 9, 14-17). In fact what is now taking place is a transformation of the whole created universe, its return into the divine likeness and the freedom and privileges of 'sonship'; (Romans VIII 18-30, cf Matt. VI 43-48). And if God is on our side, 'with us', after this manner, all the powers that would oppose and hurt and destroy us are of no account whatever. For what could possibly shut us off from this love of Christ? I am utterly convinced

that neither death nor life, nor unseen Spirit Powers, nothing in the present of the future, no Elemental Energies in the heights and depths of the Universe, nor anything else whatever in the whole of the created world, could separate us from that love of God that came to us in Jesus, our Messiah and Lord" (Romans VIII 31-9). That is how St. Paul answered men's fears of the Elemental Powers in whose existence they then believed. And he goes on: In Jesus God was reaffirming - saying 'Yes' to - all His old promises - and more (II Cor. I 19-20). One had only to recall the face of Jesus to see there the new, the real 'shekhinah' in which the glory of the divine Presence shone in its full splendour (II Cor. IV 6). No doubt the man Jesus of Nazareth was the divine in a human form and therefore subject to the limitations of human nature, and it was in this form that he chose the way of the Cross; but it was just because of that act of self-surrender and self-sacrifice that God, whom Jesus called 'Father', had now established him as the supreme power in the universe (Philip. II 6-11). Indeed, the Crucifixion became more and more central in the development of these beliefs as time went on. Ephesians opens with an impassioned affirmation that it is the clue to the whole 'secret' ('mysterion') of the Divine Purpose in history; the crucial event in that history: the culminating act by which God broke down all the barriers of division, separation, misunderstanding, suspicion and hatred; and so demonstrated once and for all "the incredible richness of ^{God's} His generosity and goodness" which had come to men in Jesus the Messiah. The goal of history must therefore be the bringing together, the at-one-ment of the entire creation - all God's creatures in heaven and earth, as well as man - under Messiah-Jesus, who was the supreme revelation of God's nature and purpose. But if Jesus is the centre and focus of all God's intentions

and activities in relation to man, these must embody such an outpouring of generosity and loving kindness as passes human understanding (Eph. I and II). That "the full sweep and scope" of this divine wisdom and creative energy could never be confined to one 'Chosen People', but must eventually embrace all mankind was, the writer believes, the special insight given to ^{Paul} him as his own ^{gracious} 'gift of grace' (Eph. III 1-12). In Colossians 'Jesus Messiah' is identified with the Logos: "the visible likeness of the invisible God", the first of all created beings, the agent of God in the creation of this universe (Col. I 12-18, II 9-10). But the main emphasis is still on Jesus and his choice of the Cross as Messiah; and this is still the supreme revelation of God's nature and purpose, showing the real nature and extent of God's generosity and goodness (Col. I 6). This was the act by which man's estrangement from himself and God was ended, and the at-one-ment made a living reality in the daily lives of all Christian believers (Col. I 20-29, II 13-15).

The most remarkable thing is, not simply the identification of the Messiah with the Logos (though this was remarkable enough); but the identification of this Messiah ^{-Logos} with Jesus of Nazareth, and the conviction that his choice of the Cross is the clue to the whole of God's nature, to His purpose in history and to His self-revelation to man. And that therefore this nature and purpose must be one of unimaginable, unlimited generosity and loving-kindness which had as its object the creation in man of the same spirit of generosity and kindness.

Thus in the last 'Letters' which reflect the development of St. Paul's faith in Christ - (or possibly the development of that faith by some follower of his) - we have reached a point where the historic Jesus is identified

with the Messiah, and the Messiah with the Logos.] It is this conception and belief that the writer of the Fourth Gospel adopts and in the light of which he reinterprets 'the gospel story', not on the human plane of the synoptic tradition but on the 'spiritual' level of the Divine Drama as the Logos knew it. John's 'Ephesian' tradition, like the other Church-Centre traditions embodied in the synoptics, undoubtedly contains unique fragments of historical 'tradition' not to be found elsewhere. It is obvious, for example, that Jesus' 'ministry' must have included visits to Judea (Luke XIII 31-35. Cf too such explanations of incidents as John VI 15 and sayings like IV 48). But these are incidental; and the Gospel aims mainly at being a reinterpretation. This being so, we are bound to ask ourselves whether the undoubted appeal and insight of the reflective discourses gathered round the Last Supper are an adequate justification of the denial of the whole synoptic tradition which, as we have seen, this reinterpretation entails. Then there are the frequent 'miraculous' signs (*semeia*, John II 11 of XX 30-31), on which the narrative and teaching now hinges; such as the turning of the water into wine. Are these inserted as actual events, or are they imaginative stories inserted for their symbolic value to be interpreted like the sayings: "I am the bread of life", "I am the water of life", "I am the true shepherd", "I am the true vine"? If as actual events, why is no other tradition aware of them, striking as they are? This problem comes to a head in the raising of Lazarus. The writer is careful to emphasise that Jesus did everything to impress this extraordinary event on the memory of the Disciples who were all present, both during the preparation for it and the event itself. According to John it marked the crisis of

of Jesus' career; for it was after this miracle that the Jewish leaders decided to get rid of him. But surely an extraordinary event of this kind must have impressed even Jesus' opponents in a more positive way. The scene itself is presented in such vivid detail as to make it unforgettable if witnessed: e.g. Lazarus moving out of the grave still wrapped tightly in the grave clothes - i.e. not walking naturally, but moving under a sort of supernatural compulsion. Is it credible that if they had witnessed such an event in such circumstances, there should be no record in 'the tradition' of any of the eyewitnesses having remembered or referred to it? But the raising of Lazarus is only the most striking example of such 'miraculous proofs' which Jesus is recorded in the Gospel as having deliberately used as such throughout. The author himself records a saying of Jesus:

'Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe' which is in exact accord with Jesus' deliberate refusal to give such 'proofs' in the earliest synoptic sources, and St. Paul's pointed remark that it was the Jews who ask for such [^]semeia (Mark viii 11,12; Q parallel Luke XI 16, 29; Matt. XII 38-39 and XVI 1-4, I Cor. I 22-23).

The contradiction of the main synoptic tradition raises another question. The writer professes to follow and express the true workings of the mind of the Logos throughout. But how does he know this? If he read them into the story and asserted that this is how the Logos must have acted and thought, this would amount to claiming an insight into the 'Divine Mind' hardly credible unless there was a record of some first-hand authority for it. Who was this authority? Later tradition said St. John. But the evidence *more than* is scanty and unreliable. Moreover the John of synoptic tradition was

anything but a mystic or reflective genius. He was a fisherman like Peter; and he and his brother were so hot-headed and impulsive that Jesus nicknamed them 'The Thunderstorms'. He showed so little insight into Jesus' mind that he demanded pride of place in the Messianic Kingdom, just after Jesus had been trying to revolutionise their ideas of greatness (Mark III 17; IX 30-35 with X 35-7; IX 38-9). It was he and his brother who wanted to call down the lightning to blast the Samaritan village (Luke IX 51). The same characteristic persists in the one later anecdote of him that has survived: "We are told that Poly^{ax} reported that John the Disciple when going into the baths at Ephesus saw Cerinthus (a 'heretic') there and immediately dashed out crying 'Hurry and get out before the bath-house collapses because Cerinthus the enemy of the truth is inside', (Irenaeus) - ~~this is~~ hardly in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount! Peter is, in the synoptic tradition, the acknowledged leader and spokesman of the Twelve. Are we to suppose that all the time it was the John of that tradition who was listening to, understanding and memorising the Johannine discourses of Jesus? But if John was not the eyewitness authority, who was? The Fourth Gospel is strangely ambiguous; it hints at ^a mysterious 'beloved Disciple' who is the most intimate with Jesus and has connections with the High Priests' entourage, and so forth. But did Jesus really have ^{any} favourites? ^{How} did the earlier traditions miss this most remarkable relation? Actually we hear nothing of this Disciple, in the Gospel, until the Last Supper, when he makes his first appearance. (John XIII 23f.) He is not named, but is introduced in order that he may be claimed as the eyewitness-authority by the later 'editor' of the Gospel (John XXI 24,) who does not profess to be himself

the writer of the Gospel. But most disturbing of all is the disappearance, with the human Jesus of Mark and Q, of that love and friendliness that he embodies and which he declares to be the most essential characteristic of God: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you and behave maliciously towards you.. in order that you may be perfect with the perfection of your divine Father, and showing a family likeness to him": "forgive those who wrong you till seventy times seven".

In the Fourth Gospel, on the contrary, we find a small group of believers, and outside them a wide circle of unbelievers; the relations with the latter are hostile; over them broods the undying "Wrath" ^{of mt III-7. 'Q'} (III 36) _{and so forth.} they are liars like their father the devil; ^L This rasping note is apt to creep into all the clashes and arguments with them (V 37f, VI 26f, VIII 12f, ~~XXI/XXXIX/XXXIX~~ IX 39f. X30-36 is a quibble). The Fourth Gospel is often referred to as the Gospel of 'agape'; but in fact neither the word nor the conception occurs before the Last Discourse; and it is then deliberately confined to the inner group of disciples gathered round the table at that Supper, with a glancing reference to those whom they may afterwards convert (XIII 1f, XIV 21-4, XV 9-17, XVI 26-7, XVII 9, 20-23). This is not God the great Lover and great Giver of Jesus, whose characteristic for St. Paul is an inexhaustible 'grace' or generosity. Nor is this Jesus the Jesus whose portrait Paul drew in I Cor. XIII: "I may speak with all the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have not the Christ love I am only a loud empty noise. I may have all knowledge and insight (gnôsis) so that I understand all the secrets of the Universe, but without the Christ love it is only a hollow sham. You remember those three great sayings of Jesus himself:

"If you have real faith you can move mountains"; "Go and sell all you possess and give it to the poor"; "Take up your cross and follow me to death". Well, I may have that faith that moves mountains: I may distribute all my goods to the poor; Yes, I may go as a martyr to the cross - or Nero's burning stake: - I may do all that Jesus said, but without his Christ-love they are worthless - I repeat, utterly worthless. The love, I mean, that is always patient, always kind, always gentle, always humble, always serene, always generous, all-forgiving .. We are still only children in God's nursery. But when our present condition and our present world has passed away, there are three things that will last on unfading, imperishable: our trust in God, our hope in God and the Christ-love. *and the greatest even of these is the Christ-like love* (I Cor. XIII).

"So serve one another in love.." As Jesus said, the whole of the Law and the Prophets can be summed up in one word: "Love your neighbours as yourself" The harvest of the Christ-Spirit is love, gaiety, serenity, patience, friendliness, generosity, loyalty, gentleness, self-control. . Bear one another's burdens, that is the way to live the Christ-life (Gal. V 13f).

"I kneel before the Father from whom every family on earth derives its name and nature..to pray that His Christ may come alive in your hearts; that you may be so deeply rooted in love that you may come to know the love of Christ - though it far surpasses all our knowledge of it - and thereby be filled with all the richness of God... As one who is suffering imprisonment for Him, I beg you to live in a way that is worthy of His appeal to you - a life of utter modesty and gentleness and forbearance and patience - in short a life of love ... Let us hold on to the truth, and by this love become wholly identified with ^h Him... Put away all bitterness and passion and anger and abuse and insults, and every trace of malice; be kind to one another,

tender-hearted, generous, with the quality of generosity God has shown to you in Christ. - Be like God; show a family likeness to Him by loving others as Christ loved you and sacrificed himself for you" (Eph. IV).

"May they learn what the Christ-love means, with the conviction that comes from insight - insight into the open secret of that God who is the 'Father' of Jesus, who when you were spiritually dead in evil gave you new life in Christ. Yes, He forgave us all the wrong we had done, cancelled all the judgments that stood against us, nailing them to the Cross ...

As God's own children then, whom He has chosen and loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, friendliness, humility, gentleness, good temper; be forbearing and forgiving. Above everything else be full of love; for it is the Christ-love that makes life perfect (Col. III) ". Such passages as these leave no doubt at all as to the unique characteristic which Paul had found in Jesus - the characteristic that had persuaded him that Jesus was 'God's Messiah'; and that if this was true, God must be quite different from what he had supposed before he had 'seen' Jesus. We can now see that it is identical with the unique characteristic that we later find stamped on the earliest gospel records, and that proved too original and authentic to be forgotten or obscured or erased by any of the plain misunderstandings, limitations and misinterpretations by which the recorders, being human like the rest of us, unwittingly distorted it: limitations on which (for example) the first chapters of Acts - as well as the Gospel records themselves, so honestly recorded by Mark and (unwittingly again) so dishonestly obscured by later recorders - throw such a clear light.

But a generation before Mark, one writer had already provided the

greatest of all examples of how original Jesus and his original gospel could overcome every kind of prejudice, however passionate and convinced, and take possession of a man's whole being. Jesus, we may remember, had staked everything on its power to do so; and this proves he was right; proves why he and his real gospel could and did survive, in spite of everything ('What does it matter who or what is working against it? Nothing can withstand such love in the end' *Romans viii 31f*). At first sight we should say that Paul was the last person we might expect to surrender to the reality of Jesus. He himself exhibits in all his writings the passionate nature - all the more powerful because of their pure sincerity - which, developed and encouraged by his early training (*Phil 4 ia 4f*), made of him the Grand Inquisitor of Acts () and of his own admissions (*Phil 6f etc*) what made him the greatest and most understanding of all the men Jesus won over? Perhaps we can find a clue in one of Jesus' own sayings: 'If any man would become my disciple, he must take up his cross and follow me'. If such an existentialist choice is the condition of understanding, Paul was certainly qualified to know the truth: 'Hungry, thirsty, clothes in rags, sleepless, homeless.. stoned, scourged, mobbed, imprisoned .. in danger of death on sea and on land; in danger from floods and storms, from shipwreck and from robbers and from the plots of men who had sworn to kill me .. Treated as the scum and refuse of the earth .. God's doomed gladiator in the world arena - morituri te salutant - a spectacle to men and angels .. abused we bless, reviled we conciliate, persecuted we bear it in patience' (*1 Cor xi. 23f*).

Here is the Paul who confirms what the earliest gospel sources tell us: that Jesus found in the relation of father and child at its best the closest analogy for the human understanding of God's relation to man, and of God's purpose in creating man. It explains why Jesus rejected the three 'Temptations'; why he refused to obscure the issue by appealing to 'signs and wonders' (miracles). It explains his way with his 'Disciples', and his choice of the Cross. It explains why the supernatural terrors and judgments of the God of vengeance, of 'the wrath' that hangs over heretics and unbelievers armed with thunderbolts and the massed legions of Heaven, of 'eternal damnation' and the fires of hell, of the 'dies irae - day of wrath Oh day of mourning, see the crucified returning!' - all these and all such are seen to be the products of man's own cruel and terror-stricken imagination that they are; and that they were, in Paul's great imaginative phrase 'nailed to the Cross' of 'God's crucified Messiah' - the Jesus who is the supreme embodiment of all that is supremely wise and great in the universe. This (said St. Paul) is our Gospel - the gospel of the real Jesus - Messiah'. (I Cor. 2:14 of 8 Ep.).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As these are, I believe, matters of the utmost importance for humanity and for the solution of the human Predicament, I must now try and state candidly what conclusions I find myself persuaded to draw from the evidence.

The historical records demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that the Christian 'Movement' originated in one person: Jesus of Nazareth. What we know about him can be gathered from the impact he made and the historical effects of that impact. These were - and have continued to be - of such great moment in the history and development of our civilization that we have to come to the best understanding we can of this 'movement'. Who was this Jesus? What did he really say and do? What has his influence been due to? ^{What answer} Can we find an answer in the records the Movement has left of itself?

When we press these questions we find ourselves driven by the evidence of the early records to some surprising conclusions. Every age and society has its own peculiar assumptions and beliefs, which it generally takes for granted and on the basis of which it carries on its activities. We have abundant evidence of what these general assumptions and beliefs were in the time of Jesus, both in Jewish Palestine and the Empire at large; also of the later generations when the records of him were made and the Christian communities were established outside Judea in the 'hellenistic' provinces of the Roman Empire, and eventually in Rome itself.

The New Testament records themselves clearly reflect the current beliefs and tendencies, and the way in which they affected the minds of people in those times. It is therefore no difficult matter to trace

whether and how far they affected the minds both of the recorders and of the people from whom they obtained the information they recorded. The records make it quite plain that the authors did share these current beliefs. But what is really remarkable is that we find embedded in their accounts, side by side with these ordinary assumptions and tendencies, incontrovertible evidence of another way of thought and belief which is quite original and quite ⁱⁿconsistent with the conventional ways. How these two incompatible tendencies came to persist side by side with one another in the same writings is a matter that calls for the most careful enquiry.

That new beginnings and 'original' events do occur from time to time, and do transform the historical situation, far from being a matter for surprise, is one of the common-places of historical knowledge. We are witnessing them to-day on a grand scale and in (e.g.) Western Science and the Communist Revolutions. These are transforming our own world so profoundly and so rapidly that we do not know how to keep up with them or gain rational control of them (cf. Parts I and II). Such land-marks are a regular feature of the human story.

These transformations are of two general kinds. They may be due to the breakdown and disintegration of old forms of society and civilization which no longer satisfy the communities in which they occur or are not strong enough to resist change. Such negative events may be brought about or hastened by disruptive forces from outside. A familiar example of this type of occurrence took place soon after the New Testament events, with the collapse of 'eternal Rome' - an event closely linked with the destiny of Christianity. The positive transformations of ways of living and thinking

are generally due to the arrival of individuals endowed with the originality and power which we call genius, and who embody in themselves the 'creative advance'.

That such an extraordinary personality originated the transformation which we know as 'the rise of Christianity' seems to me beyond question. There is ample evidence regarding the contemporary beliefs and tendencies in the Roman Empire - including Palestine; and there are clear traces of their influence on the New Testament writers and their documents. But side by side with these, and in sharp contrast to them, we find in the New Testament records another stream of 'tradition', so original and so irreconcilable, that it cannot have arisen out of the common tradition. The surprising thing is that they should have survived together in this way. The records themselves share much of the common outlook and give no evidence of originality; so this revolutionary element cannot have come from them. The only reasonable explanation is that they had their source in the impact of the kind of original genius we have referred to; and this original tradition was of such authority that it could not be tampered with.

But this is exactly what the records themselves are never tired of asserting. It is the foundation of their 'faith', 'message', 'gospel' that the Founder of this faith was a person of such quality and originality that they could not believe he was an ordinary human being; and his 'gospel' was a new 'revelation'.

What puts the matter beyond doubt is the testimony of a man who was himself a genius of striking originality and power. St. Paul's 'letters' are the earliest of the New Testament documents, written a generation before

any of the gospels. His whole point was to make it clear how this Jesus and his 'gospel' had taken hold of and transformed his whole outlook, way of life, and character. He explains to us how he had been brought up; what his convictions were as an orthodox and 'zealous' Jew; and why he had felt bound to stamp out the new and dangerous heresy. He tells us how it came to him as a 'blinding' revelation that Jesus and his gospel were 'divine' truth; and how this new conviction compelled him to rethink his entire religious faith and system of beliefs; above all it transformed his whole conception of God. He tells us all he had to do and suffer for this new and passionately held conviction; how it changed his whole way of living and acting as well as his thinking. And then he tells us with a clarity and sincerity rarely found anywhere, exactly where the secret of this new gospel lay. 'Love' of an extraordinary quality was the living essence of Jesus and of all he did and said. He describes this new quality of love again and again, in language of the most moving beauty and power: witness the hymn to Christ-like love in I Cor. XIII, and to the 'fruits of the spirit' (Gal V. 22 *etc*). It was this quality of love, he says, that completely changed his conception of God; for the 'love' that Jesus lived, and taught about God, meant that God was like Jesus, 'God was in Christ'; and therefore, if God was like Jesus, the most essential characteristic of God must be a love and generosity beyond measure: 'we know what the love that lived and worked (energised) in Jesus was like .. We know ^{now} that there can be nothing in the universe diviner, wiser, and in the end more powerful than that love.. It was this God who was in Christ when he went to the Cross to die for all men as God's children .. The same God lives and energises in Christ still, creating the very life and spirit of Jesus in

all who respond to this love.. There was nothing Jesus would not do for men, so there is nothing that the God of Jesus will not do for them! Whatever we make of them, these are plainly the central and passionate convictions of St. Paul. And as he grows older and his faith matures, we can see them gradually transforming all the old habits, beliefs and traditions that he brought with him from Judaism and his hellenistic environment. It works like the leaven of the Parable (Lu xiii. 20-1.).

Now this is exactly what we find in the 'original' element of the gospels. Paul said he got it all direct from Jesus of Nazareth and his 'gospel', and that is what the recorders too must have done; there is no other way of accounting for it being there, in contradiction to the other discordant elements from the traditional background. The Sermon on the Mount, the great parables, the story of the Crucifixion and Paul's hymn to love - all speak with the same voice and say the same thing.

'That Jesus was the Messiah' is of central importance in this story of Jesus and spread of the new faith, precisely because it was, for them all, the link that united 'the love of Jesus' to 'God's love'. As time passed, the 'followers' of Jesus put him more and more consciously and conclusively at the centre of the life and activity of God Himself.

The evidence for this is decisive. But when we go back to the original Jesus the extraordinary nature of what took place becomes apparent. Once again, we have to ask how a peasant from Galilee, with no status, no wealth, no social influence, no political power - a wandering preacher who came into conflict with the religious orthodoxy and the political leaders of his own people; a man who after three years of this life, at the age of

thirty-three, was publicly condemned and 'sent to the gallows' - how this man came to 'turn the world upside down', to change men as he changed Paul, and went on to change the course of history. There is only one clue for them and for us: the quality of Jesus' 'loving-kindness'. What else was there?

This brings us back to our own present human Predicament. We can now be confident that Dostoevsky was right in his interpretation of the personality and 'gospel' of the Prisoner. He was also right in seeing that certain powerful movements, that had arisen out of Christendom itself, were a direct denial of and challenge to, the 'original' Jesus and his gospel. The Grand Inquisitor was one embodiment of these movements and forces.

Since then, the new forces released in the world to-day, and which have now for the first time brought all the peoples and civilizations of the world into their orbit and subject to their influence, have brought about a new crisis in history. The choice therefore seems to be more crucial and universal than ever before.

Where does the truth lie? Was Jesus right? Is his way of living and thinking either possible or desirable as a solution of the human problem? What is its relation to the other world forces and solutions present to-day?

It is significant that neither original Christianity nor Marxist Communism confine themselves to theory or belief. Both were revolutions that went on to embody themselves in a Community, as the natural, practical and logical outcome of their 'creed' itself: a way of living which

determined everything else.

Translated into the terms of our own limited approach, this means: What is the place and significance of the person and gospel of the original Jesus in the development and creative advance of the mens creatrix? What is their part in the struggle of the mens creatrix with the forces that work against the creative advance? How are they related to the end in which the mens creatrix, and with it the world of human persons, can realise their nature most fully and abolish once and for all the 'estrangement' of man from his true being?

On the other hand, what is the true nature of Communism and its relation to the mens creatrix and its goal? What have the other movements at work in the contemporary world, such as modern science, to offer the mens creatrix and its creative advance? How in all this complication of currents of influence can we distinguish the mens creatrix in its creative advance from illusions and 'corruptions of consciousness?' And from the anti-creative forces?

This is the limit of our present enquiry. But in the end it can only be a temporary stopping place. The genuine and original Christianity was a quite clear and definite assertion that the 'Love' embodied in Jesus, in his religious faith, in his teaching and in all his activities and personal relations, is the summit of wisdom, the true meaning of power, the most real thing in man's universe. In religious language it is the divine activity: the essence of the true nature of 'God'. We shall hardly find a better expression of this than St. Paul's hymn to love; and this concludes, we recall, with the assertion that, while the rest of man's life and

activities may appear to us as a confused and perplexing shadow - show, a maya due to our present stage of development as children in God's nursery, - when we grow to maturity and see things as they are we shall find that, when we have outgrown the mirror-image confusion of our present state, we shall know that there are three ultimate realities in our human existence which do not belong to the shadow-confusion; they are: 'our trust in the God of Jesus; all the hopes for ourselves and the world that this rightly inspires in us; and the Christ-like love. And of these three 'realities' the greatest is the Christ love'. I do not know how the original and real gospel of Jesus could be better expressed. This love, both in Jesus and in his greatest follower, Paul, is the very life and essence of their God.

Collingwood was no doubt right in insisting that before you can consider or discuss belief in God, you must ask and answer the question: 'What do you mean by God?' What do we mean by Christianity? I submit that there is no doubt whatever what we should mean by 'Christianity'; or according to this true Christianity, what the Christian should mean by God. It has been said 'once for all' by Jesus himself, and interpreted rightly by his greatest and most understanding follower, St. Paul, in the passages quoted here.

So of Marxism. 'What do you mean by Marxism?' Someone has got to explain to us as convincingly and lucidly as St. Paul did for Christianity, what Marxism truly and essentially is; what the evidence persuades or even compels us to believe that Marxism is according to Marx. What is the value and reliability of the interpretation of essential Marxism by Lenin,

Trotsky, Stalin, or whoever the best interpreter may be? Until we know this we cannot truly assess the value of Marxism or Communism, and how they stand in relation to the mens creatrix and the creative advance. Similarly, with 'materialism', 'dialectical materialism', the clue to 'the historical process' - and all the rest of it. We have to find a way (to quote Collingwood again) 'to make a clean breast of it'. To understand and answer these questions we have to try to see through and correct all 'corruptions of consciousness', the 'magnetic fields' of bias and prejudice, the anti-mens creatrix, and all such powerful influences, so that we can clarify and present 'Marxism', and 'modern science', and 'materialism' and subsequent movements of thought with the honesty, integrity and clarity with which Paul ^{discovered + presented} saw the gospel of Jesus. There are other rival claimants too. For example: ^{are} Platonism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism relevant to our human predicament? If so, what are we to understand by them? What do they really say?

These are the questions that are rising on every side of us; and unlike Jesting Pilate, we must stay for answers till we find them.

What resources have we? Can we, for example, find illumination in the works of the Creative Imagination? Our whole enquiry has led us to expect so. *Let us see.*

General Outline of the Complete Study.

Everything in these studies - the personal experience which has led me to ask new questions and look for new answers (Part I): Our Human Predicament to-day, so far as my very limited and inadequate understanding can comprehend it (Part II); a study of the solution offered by Christianity according to the evidence of the New Testament (Part III. A, B, and C.); examples of the light which may be thrown on these problems by the activity of the creative Imagination (Part IV - Poetry); the possible relevance to our human predicament of a study of the activity of the mens creatrix in early ritual, myth, symbolism and folk-lore (Part V) - these are the best I can do by way of contributing a widow's mite to the creative advance which may (if we survive) lead (I hope) to the World Commonwealth of Persons.