SOME RECENT CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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At the last conference of Modern Churchmen one of the speakers is reported to have said that the older Modernists were not abreast with the most recent developments of New Testament criticism. How far this is so may be judged by studying the latest book by the ex-abbé Loisy, *La Naissance du Christianisme*, and the appreciative articles on it that have appeared in recent numbers of the *Hibbert Journal* by Dr. Jacks.

These writings will be hereafter referred to under the letters N.C. and H.J.

In the opinion of M. Loisy we do not even know when or where Jesus was born (N.C., p. 84). He was one of the numerous agitators who disturbed the Roman administration of Palestine between A.D. 6 and A.D. 70. He represented himself as an envoy sent to prepare for the *immediate* coming of the Kingdom of God and declared that repentance was necessary to secure admission to it. He was a disciple and probably, later in his career, a rival of John the Baptist. He also seems to have regarded himself as the predestined Messiah of the Kingdom when it came. But, although he seems to have been morally superior to Theudas and the fanatics who claimed to be the destined deliverers of Israel, he was not less deluded than they were. (N.C., pp. 85, 96–8.) After a very short ministry he was put to death by the Romans as a disturber of the peace and his body was, "without doubt," thrown into the pit reserved for criminals. (N.C., pp. 111–13.)

The few followers that he had gathered among the peasants of Galilee abandoned him as soon as he was arrested. They were not witnesses of the ignominy and horror of his death and had no share in his burial.[1] (N.C., p. 111.)

But he had inspired them with such obstinate fanaticism that even this disaster did nothing to quench their faith in the coming of the Kingdom. "To spirits familiar with the belief in a resurrection and immortality death is an incident without significance." (N.C., p. 121.) So when they had recovered from the shock that his death had admittedly given them, they began first to hope and then to believe that he would soon come again as the Messiah of the promised reign of God.

Peter imagined that he saw his Master alive again (he probably dreamed this). He imparted his dreams to his companions and they all began to dream. Such simple people would never think of asking for proofs that their faith was well founded.

Their enthusiastic faith invented all the proofs which were neces-

[1] Dr. Jacks considers this "a point of much importance." (H.J., 1934, p. 503.) Of course, the whole idea is absolutely imaginary.

sary for its conservation. (N.C., pp. 120–2, 129, 131.) They came back to Jerusalem to wait for the return of the Lord. They had no intention of founding a Church or sending missionaries to the Gentiles, but these things followed inevitably, in spite of the disapproval of the original disciples. (N.C., pp. 131, 132.)

The Hellenistic community at Jerusalem produced the first missionaries.

When this story of a Galilean prophet who was dead, but who was expected soon to appear on earth again, reached Greek communities where people were rather more educated and sceptical, more cogent proofs of the greatness of his person and the reality of his claims were (not unnaturally) demanded.

A faith of this kind could be neither proved nor disproved, but as time went on and Jesus did not come again, an attempt was made to turn attention to his life on earth and to the mystical efficacy of his death.

Certain "prophets" who imagined that they were inspired by the Spirit of Jesus uttered sayings and commands which were subsequently put into his mouth by the Evangelists when men began to ask what sort of a man this Jesus was and what he had taught.

But most of what passes for his teaching was taken from the sayings of the Rabbis and some was "judeohellenic." (N.C., p. 89.) His real teaching had never been collected. Why should it have been? Men were not interested at first in his life as a man. The immediate expectation of the coming of the Kingdom had turned their minds from this. (N.C., p. 88.)

Even the sayings that such extreme sceptics as Schmiedel considered authentic, on the ground that they were of such a nature that no one in the early Church would have invented them, are now assigned by Loisy to the Community or its Prophets. (N.C., p. 90.)

As the first disciples required no proof of the reality of the survival of Jesus (for to call the event a Resurrection is to anticipate the ideas of a later date), nothing was heard about the story of the empty tomb until the Second Gospel was published at an unknown, but certainly late, date, and then a lame apology was made for it by the insertion of the statement that the women said nothing about it at the time. (N.C., p. 115.)

The early community had customs such as ceremonial washings and meals out of which the Sacraments were afterwards developed, but the Lord's supper in its present form is not even Apostolic. The "Apostles" were not a body of men commissioned by Jesus. They were the leaders of the Community at Jerusalem. The myth that they were chosen by Jesus was invented after Paul laid claim to be "an Apostle of Jesus Christ." (N.C., pp. 136–8.) Paul only made this claim after he had been rejected as the Apostle of the Community. (N.C., p. 140.)

He had nothing to do with the death of Stephen and the story of his conversion in the Acts is quite mythical.

Jerusalem was no place for the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah, for most of the Jews considered that the man who had

been crucified on Golgotha was quite unworthy of that position. (N.C., pp. 132, 140.)

So Christianity, as we know it, was the product of the contact of the simple ideas of the fanatical peasants of Galilee with Hellenistic communities whom this crude eschatology did not altogether satisfy.

The book that gives us the best idea of the teaching of the first Christian missionaries is the Apocalypse, which is supposed to support the contention of the critics that the early Church took no interest in the details of the earthly life of Jesus, except in the fact of his death, the fable of his resurrection and his expected return. (N.C., p. 37.)

Some of the matter in the Epistles of Paul is early. But all the christological and mystical passages are to be ascribed to "pre-heretical Gnosis" of the second or third generation. (N.C., p. 9.)

The Gospels are "liturgic catechisms." "*Ils renferment la légende cultuelle du Seigneur Jésus-Christ.*[1] They do not announce any other content or claim any other quality." (N.C., p. 8.)

We may conveniently sum up the whole theory by saying that all that is historically certain about Jesus may be better learnt from Tacitus than from the Gospels.

M. Loisy "humbly avows" that he has not discovered that Jesus never existed. In his opinion this hypothesis fails to explain the origin of Christianity. (N.C., p. 5.)

With this comparatively unimportant exception it is hard to see how radical criticism of the New Testament can go further than it has gone in this book.

We may be inclined to dismiss all these extravagancies with the words of Father Lagrange that it is impossible that the highest religion, the purest morality and the greatest spiritual force that the world has ever known should have had their origin in "*un fait divers de la Gazette des Tribunaux en Judée,*" or with the still more trenchant words of the Book of Job, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"

But when we have to deal with theories that a man recently asked to preach in Liverpool Cathedral receives not only with respect, but with enthusiasm, although he admits that their acceptance would endanger the whole fabric of historic Christianity, we feel that the pressure that they exercise on us is "immediate," to use Dr. Jacks' own phrase. (H.J., pp. 322–4.) We have no space

[1] We have ventured to leave this sentence untranslated. We would suggest as a paraphrase for it "the legends to which the cult of the Lord Jesus Christ gave birth," but the defect of this paraphrase is that it does not suggest that, according to the theory, the legends were not only produced by the cult of Jesus, but also produced it.

With regard to what follows, we must always be on our guard against the assumption that the Gospels are put outside the category of historical documents because their authors believed that Jesus was the Christ and wrote to confirm or produce this belief. The assumption that inspires this type of criticism is that no support for matters of faith can be found in history and that, consequently, works written by believers in any kind of historical religion *must* be unhistorical.

here to examine his convincing demonstration of the extent to which modern criticism has demolished that popular form of half-belief which would exalt Jesus into the position of the best and wisest of teachers, while regarding him as a mere man, by representing this as the faith of the early Church.

The Gospels, he points out, were intended "to give preciser form and content to a faith already in being, the general character of which may be gathered from the Pauline Epistles." (H.J., p. 327.)

It is now generally admitted that the attempt to find a purely human Jesus, even in the Second Gospel, has failed. The Evangelists present us with a Figure who demands that men should believe primarily on himself and obey his moral teaching not only because of its intrinsic excellence, but because it is his will that they should do so. The difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists is a difference in degree and not in kind. (H.J., p. 329.)

The Liberal Protestants believed that Jesus was far above the heads of his reporters. Loisy, rather imprudently, is still content to regard the first followers of Jesus as simple and illiterate persons and even to say that the Gospels could not have been written by romancers of genius, for the Evangelists had no genius. (*A propos de l'histoire des religions*, p. 289.)

But Dr. Jacks is unable to account for the origin of Christianity without finding a genius somewhere.

Jesus is obviously out of the question. Therefore Dr. Jacks is compelled to assume that "the faith centred on the risen and glorified Christ was a creative force."

He admits that we do not *know* that the Evangelists were men of genius, but he asks, "What do we know about them?"

The answer of the Modern Critical School must be, "Nothing."

Dr. Jacks is also compelled to admit that the Evangelists would themselves have endorsed the opinion that the Church has held of them, namely that they were, as mere human reporters of a divine manifestation, on a much lower level than Jesus.

They were, however, in his opinion, deluded by their antecedent belief in the divinity of Jesus. The rationalistic critic, who does not share their views as to the possibility of an incarnation, has not their justification for regarding Jesus as immeasurably superior to those who recorded his life.

If, like Dr. Martineau, he says that "acts and words which transcend the moral level of the narrators authenticate themselves as coming from Jesus," he is in danger of doing in the twentieth century what the Evangelists did in the first, that is, of making Jesus the object of a cult. (H.J., pp. 330–2.)

From this danger we should now be delivered, thanks to M. Loisy. Therefore, as we know nothing about the Evangelists, except that they wrote under the influence of a baseless supposition, we are justified in believing that they were geniuses.

"The creative faith that transformed Jesus into the Saviour of mankind was surely not incapable of making him the speaker of

original and exalted sayings appropriate to the character assigned to him." (H.J., p. 229.)

No documentary evidence, says Dr. Jacks, can prove that anyone was the greatest man that ever lived. This superlative excellence belongs to God alone. (H.J., p. 331.)

Certainly: but what if the Evangelists were right in their belief that the life of Jesus was a manifestation of the life of God?

This leads us to consider how we ought to regard the theories about the origin of Christianity which are put forward by men who regard as inadmissible the solution of the problem which has commended itself to a number of persons who are at least their equals in learning and character.

Loisy cannot even say that superlative excellence belongs to God alone, for he is a pantheist and finds excellence, if he finds it anywhere, in the Spirit of Humanity.

With regard to his views of human nature and of the relationship between man and whatever superior force there may be in the universe we find an illuminating quotation from his "Religion of Israel" in the *Hibbert Journal.*

"Universal life is an immense abyss in which our feeble existence is swallowed up. The history of mankind, taken by itself, is beyond our comprehension. Everything in the infinitude which presses on us from all sides is, in a sense, a mystery to us. It is perhaps very presumptuous to represent the hidden force which has produced all this as familiarly known to us and to regard it as having much to do with the vermin which crawls on our globe." (*Op. cit.*, p. 8.)

In his autobiography he boasted, while he was still a priest, that he was one of those who had earned the right not to believe in the supernatural.

Dr. Jacks nevertheless assures us that he is "a scientific investigator without *parti pris.*" (H.J., p. 323.)

But it is obvious that a man who holds such views about God and man can hardly regard contending theories about the origins of Christianity in quite the same way as even those Modernists who believe in an incarnation in the sense that man at his best is of the same nature as God.

Further, Loisy is the obedient servant of the "Historical Method." Those who have never looked into the question may imagine that the Historical Method is the harmless and praiseworthy process of examining and sifting evidence of an alleged past event and the attempt to describe it as it actually occurred without prejudice.

But Mr. R. Hanson in a valuable book of essays entitled *Dogma* has defined it as follows:

"The Historical Method is a good enough servant to Theology. It is a very bad master. If it is not strictly limited and controlled by faith in a superior source of knowledge, . . . there is an end to any claim on the part of theology to be the guardian and exponent of a unique and final revelation.

"The Historical Method has done its work when it acknowledges, as its most competent and sincere exponents do acknowledge, that the Jesus of History is an enigma.

"But the fact that the claims of Jesus are to the natural man enigmatical is not, in the first instance, a discovery of science; it is part of the Gospel story.

"The Historical Method depends wholly on the hypothesis that the course of history is uniform, the events are always the natural outcome of antecedent events in a purely natural order. If any break in the sequence of natural events has in fact occurred, it is clearly beyond the competence of the Historical Method even to recognize its occurrence. To recognize the occurrence is *ipso facto* to abandon the method.

"It is not a question of the amount or quality of the evidence. It is a question of the nature of the facts to which the evidence purports to bear witness. Virgin birth and physical resurrection do not occur in ordinary human experience, nor are they consonant with the known nature of man. Therefore any belief or statement that such events have occurred must be mistaken. The test of truth is verisimilitude.

"It is a perfectly legitimate and very valuable method as applied to the ordinary events of secular history. But in regard to the possibility of a truth that transcends verisimilitude and the possible occurrence of events which are outside the ordinary course of human experience, *it begs the whole question at the outset.* [Italics ours.]

"It is not that the evidence is weighed and deliberately rejected: it is never admitted. What is really in dispute is not the nature of evidence, but the nature of God.

"The fact is that for most scientific historians and for many modern theologians the Historical Method is not merely the testing of a hypothesis justified, as other scientific hypotheses, by the success of its works, but the ruthless application of a dogma which must be made to work at all costs.

"The sole justification for raising the presupposition of the uniformity of experience from the status of a tentative hypothesis to that of a fundamental dogma is the conviction that all experience is ultimately reducible to the experience of a highly trained scientific intellect. Further, that all reality, all experience—God, to use the theological expression, is exhaustively expressed or is achieving exhaustive expression in the historical process, conceived as the concatenation of purely natural events. 'History' so conceived is the only expression of God." (*Op. cit.*, pp. 99, 100.)

The "results" of New Testament criticism are always presented to us as the product of purely scientific investigation by experts, and the plain man is either openly or implicitly warned off the field.

But it cannot be too often stated that in reality they are no more than hypotheses invented, for the most part, by men to whose conception of history the description given above applies in every particular.

Further, these hypotheses no longer depend for their validity on an accurate estimate of the significance of the synoptic problem where the need for a highly trained intellect might make itself felt to determine how the Gospels came to be as they are. Now they are all dismissed as the products of the cult of a well-meaning fanatic in its transference from the ignorant peasantry of Judea to the more cultured people of the Middle East.

Here we are faced with a problem of human conduct which the plain man should be fairly well fitted to deal with.

What has to be decided is the probability that if an unknown Galilean announced for a few months that the reign of God was about to be established on earth immediately and that he was to be the vicegerent of God when this was accomplished, the Christian Church with its exalted morality and its theology which has satisfied so many of the greatest intellects of the world would be the natural

product of this commonplace event, in such a place and at such a time.

To imagine that such a theory as this can be *proved* from the available evidence is absurd.

It owes whatever plausibility it may possess for certain minds simply to the fact that it is the only way in which the unquestioned rise and existence of Christianity can be explained without admitting the possibility of a personal God who cares for His creatures, an incarnation and the existence of a man who was a messenger from God and whose personality was a revelation of His nature.

We deliberately leave on one side the question of the nature of the resurrection and that of miracles, because if the existence of a God who can and will communicate with man is put out of question it is a waste of time to discuss whether the resurrection was more than an hallucination or miracles more than the influence of one human mind on another.

Those who see in the action of the disciples after the death of Jesus nothing more than the triumph of the human will that would not give up its hopes of a reversal of the present order of things and the establishment of one nearer to its heart's desire are bound to tear the New Testament to shreds, and to imagine for its composition a method which is improbable to the very last degree.

The extremely subjective character of the most recent theories may be judged by a few examples.

The saying of Jesus prohibiting the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles used to be considered by the most advanced critics as certainly authentic, since the missionary church would never have invented it. But now it is attributed to " a prophet " who disliked the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Church and who produced it from his inner consciousness " in all good faith " as a saying of Jesus. (H.J., 1934, p. 510.)

The saying that John the Baptist was a prophet and more than a prophet was never uttered by Jesus, but was a saying of the Johannine sect. (Loisy, N.C., p. 78.)

But the procedure of composing the Gospels was not all so innocent as this : " it is incredible that John should have discredited his own baptism in advance and exalted Christian baptism. . . . This was put into the mouth of John in order not to be obliged to admit that the Christians borrowed their rite from the Johannine sect. All these little frauds are significant . . ." etc. etc. (p. 79).

In his former books Loisy represented the burial of Jesus in a common pit as a possibility : now it is represented as a certainty (p. 113) and it is insinuated that tradition had an interest in dissimulating the true circumstances of the burial (p. 104). The name of John was added to that of Peter in the story of the healing of the lame man in the Temple in the interests of the " Ephesian Legend " (p. 134).

The difficulty of dealing with theories like this is that there is no common ground from which the argument can be conducted. If anything is found in the New Testament which contradicts the

theory, it is immediately dismissed as an apologetic expedient. The absence of any documentary evidence for the statements made by the critics is not regarded as being of the least importance and the fact that the documents contradict many of them formally is regarded as a proof that they must be true, for the Gospels were written with the express purpose of supplying evidence where none existed and in some cases of concealing the truth.

In fact, the modern critic in his enthusiasm for the Historical Method, as he conceives it, is just as indifferent to the absence of evidence for his theories as he supposes the early Christians to have been.

Speaking of their state of mind he tells us that " Faith unconsciously procures for itself all the illusions which are necessary for its preservation and progress."

Can there be any greater illusion than to suppose that the change in human life and thought that beyond all question owes its origin to the preaching of the disciples of Jesus was caused by an illusion ?

Dr. Mackinnon, a critic not to be suspected of unreasoning orthodoxy, says that the Resurrection Faith must have been founded on personal experience of contact with a real spiritual world. It could not have been an illusion produced by religious excitement. The records reveal not this, but mental shock and disillusion. The assumed condition did not exist. (*Gospel in the Early Church*, pp. 8, 9.)

Loisy, who does not believe that a spiritual world, in this sense, exists, tacitly supports Dr. Mackinnon's contention that the records do *not* bear witness to any such enthusiasm as could produce such an illusion by regarding them as deliberately falsified to produce this impression.

He also asks us to believe that the disciples regarded the death of their Master as of no importance at all and as no hindrance to the coming of the Kingdom partly because they believed in a resurrection and immortality and partly because they did not regard Jesus as the Messiah, but only as the Messiah to be. The first of these suppositions contradicts not only all the records, but also all that we know of human nature ; the second is a pure conjecture.

The faith of the disciples is supposed to explain everything. " No one," says Loisy, " who is acquainted with the nature of religious faith will be surprised that it could produce such a result in the minds of enthusiasts."

But surely Loisy and those who think with him are not the only persons who understand what religious faith is.

Most people are surprised at, and continue to invent explanations for, an event which we are here told should occasion no surprise in those who know.

Even Dr. Jacks finds it difficult to explain how the " Simple men " who were led on a disastrous adventure to Jerusalem by a " Youthful Prophet " who swiftly came to an inglorious end came

to think that he had been exalted to heaven as the Immortal Christ. (H.J., p. 500.)

Loisy has a definition of religious faith which will hardly appeal to everybody; hence, probably, his special understanding of the problem.

Religious faith is "an effort of the whole mind, imagination, intelligence and will to break through the framework of natural conditions, apparently inescapable, by which our existence seems to be mechanically determined" (p. 122).

Religion is not "the conscious domination of life by aspiration towards an absolute and abiding good which is recognised as being also the supreme reality upon which the aspirant is utterly dependent." Still less is it "love towards an infinite and eternal thing," as Dr. Taylor defines it. (*Faith of a Moralist*, II, p. 156.) It is merely an attempt to get away from what is unpleasant. This idea is further enforced by the statement that the Disciples and their followers expected the coming of the Kingdom to deliver them from the burdens and miseries of life and from the last enemy, death, and to involve the extermination of their enemies. (H.J., pp. 496, 497.)

This message, we are told, was easy to deliver and was eagerly accepted.

The whole idea was thoroughly Jewish, there was no sign of a new religion even after the "resurrection."

It is further asserted that it was quite an obvious step from the belief in the coming of a deliverer to the deification of the deliverer as soon as the message was proclaimed among people who were accustomed to deify their deliverers.

It has to be admitted that even Peter and the other Disciples believed that Jesus had entered "so to speak into the sphere of divinity by his resurrection which had set him at the right hand of God." (N.C., p. 350.)

The difference between this belief and the belief in mere survival, especially when it is supposed to have originated among Jews, is slurred over and the advance from this to a belief in the full divinity of Jesus is treated as if it were so perfectly natural, that even Pagans would be ready to make a God of a Jew who had made promises that were never performed.

So Christianity in all its essentials is represented as springing from nothing more than an unreasoning and invincible hope of deliverance from temporal ills, slightly moralised by the fear of total destruction under the coming régime for those who did not repent. (H.J., p. 497.)

But if there is any truth at all in the New Testament it is certain that what the Christian religion promised was not deliverance from temporal evil, but deliverance from sin, and that it made peace of mind and the hope of immortality depend on this essential condition.

It was so far from promising deliverance from tribulation that it deliberately stated that this would be the lot of the Christian in this world.

Dr. Jacks would have us believe that the Christian message was "relatively easy to deliver," but he can only do this by misrepresenting the content of the message. (H.J., pp. 509, 510.)

Deliverance from sin and the obligation to observe a code of morals not only higher than, but also different from, that in common use among men is not attractive to the many. When it involves certain contempt and ostracism and probable death, it becomes still more unpopular.

But this is what Christianity involved on the testimony not only of the New Testament, but on that of Pagan authors as well.

It used to be asserted that the moral code of Christianity was evolved in view of the approaching end of the age and that its impracticable character was due to the opinions of its first teachers. But now we are told that it must be attributed to a body of teachers who were trying to replace the fading hope of a catastrophic regeneration of mankind with a moral code borrowed from their surroundings. It is certainly strange that when the Church was in danger of losing the popularity which the message of immediate deliverance and vengeance is supposed to have produced, it should have deliberately made itself still more unpopular by the enforcement of such morality.

The whole history of other religions and indeed of the Christian Church itself goes to show that moral codes tend to become relaxed as they are more and more removed from the enthusiasm of first beginnings.

Probability is altogether on the side of the representation of the course of events in the New Testament, namely, that the hope of temporal deliverance was found among the disciples and friends of Jesus in the early days of his mission and was gradually replaced, under his influence, by the idea of deliverance from sin.

It is not for nothing that the message of the angel to Joseph promised one who should save his people from their *sins*, while the song of Zacharias and even the Magnificat are full of the thought of the reversal of social conditions and deliverance from enemies.

Loisy magnifies the power of religious faith, but, as we have seen, he does not mean by this what most men do.

It is one thing to say with the earlier school of Modernists that the resurrection appearances, though only psychic, nevertheless put the Disciples in touch with "the supreme reality" and revealed the truth that Jesus had conquered death and was alive for evermore. The men who maintained this view were not irreligious, although they deceived themselves into thinking that they had got rid of "miracle." On this view whatever moral awakening followed the "resurrection" had an adequate cause.

It is quite another thing to say that the highest morality and the most powerful spiritual force that the world has known had its origin in a delusion and in a fanatical expectation of an improvement in temporal conditions that was never realised, but rather completely falsified.

To try to explain this by the use of the expression "religious faith" used in a sense which is not commonly attached to these

words is simply an ingenious way of disguising the fact that an apparently sufficient cause is being alleged, where in reality no adequate cause was in operation. Even if we are pleased to consider men as no better than " vermin that crawl the earth " it is undoubtedly true that these vermin have been able to use their intellects to such good purpose as to discover a good deal of truth about their physical environment. All these discoveries have been inspired by the belief that the universe is intelligible because there is such a thing as ultimate truth. If the intellectual efforts of men are thus crowned with success in the physical sphere, we are surely justified in withholding our immediate assent when we are told, on such very slender grounds that the findings of Historical Science are that men's highest moral and spiritual attainments are founded on a complete delusion.

If this were so, the " truth " which we have now attained should enable men to rise still higher in the moral sphere with a rapidity equal to that with which their attainment of a measure of truth in the physical sciences has enabled them to advance.

In spite of what Dr. Jacks calls M. Loisy's lifelong toil " for the spiritual progress of humanity," we can see little sign of this advance.

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When we come to the question of the composition of the Gospels and the Acts we see that it follows from what has been said that in all essentials they completely misrepresent the true story of what happened.

Loisy admits this openly in the case of the Acts as we now have it. Dr. Jacks sums up his opinion by calling it " an apologetic artefact of a somewhat reprehensible type," written by a second-century compiler " with an axe to grind and more unscrupulous than most in the means he took to grind it." (H.J., p. 500.)

The original history which, wonderful to say, is supposed to have been written by Luke has been altered and submerged by " audacious fictions " by this compiler.

This language, if not elegant, is at least refreshingly candid. A curious lingering respect for tradition keeps these critics from referring to the Gospels as " reprehensible artefacts " or, in plain language, impudent forgeries, but the whole theory presupposes that this is what they are, in spite of repeated assertions that they were written in all good faith. (H.J., p. 510.)

Ex hypothesi the Evangelists started with little or no information about the insignificant fanatic who had fired the enthusiasm of a few Galilean peasants into believing that death had not put an end to his career, but that he would soon come again to earth to gratify their wishes for improved social conditions and for vengeance on their enemies without any proof at all or any desire for proof.

Their task was to provide service books and manuals of controversy for a mixed judeohellenic community which had come to regard this man as a God. For we must never forget that it was not the picture in the Gospels or anything like it that inspired

the worship of Jesus, but the worship of Jesus that made the picture necessary.

They had to describe a being who was at once God and man such as would at once satisfy Jews who regarded God as endowed with unapproachable majesty and holiness and Gentiles who were not altogether uneducated and who had long had sufficient philosophical training to make them capable of asking awkward questions. This they succeeded in doing, not in one book, but in four, partly (we are told) out of the utterances of prophets who imagined in all good faith that they were speaking in the Spirit of Jesus, and partly out of their own imagination inspired by a shrewd appreciation of what was needed.

For example, the Evangelists described the Galilean disciples (in direct contradiction with the truth which some of them must have known) as dull and cowardly men of little faith who were completely disheartened by the death of Jesus. This they did partly to satisfy the jealousy of Paul and his followers and partly because such a misrepresentation was a particularly ingenious proof of the reality of the resurrection, a proof of which Christian preachers have not been slow to take advantage ever since.

Those who will not admit that there is any moral and spiritual force in the world except the Spirit of Humanity will, no doubt, continue to believe, as indeed they are compelled to believe, that the highest moral and spiritual influence that the world has ever known was founded, not only on a delusion, but on an elaborate system of falsehood.

When they imagine that this Spirit owes whatever advance it made in the first century of our era to the kind of process which they believe was at work in the production of the Gospels, they are reducing all that appertains to the moral and even to the rational side of our nature to a state of chaos which makes their assumption that there is such a thing as truth a mere absurdity.

A NEW HIGHWAY. By T. Wigley, M.A. *George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

It is impossible within the limits of our space to examine adequately this Modernist Apologia. For that is what it is. Little of orthodox belief will remain if the reader goes far on this new highway. At every stage of the journey he will revise his opinions, and at the end he will wonder where he is. Although the book is not intended for professional students, but for thoughtful men and women who desire to bring their religious beliefs and expressions into line with newer ideas in science and philosophy, it will not be easy for those who have had no technical training to assimilate what is set before them. Those who have read some theology will find much to criticise. What the good people at Blackheath who "sit under" Mr. Wigley think about it all we do not know. Certainly anyone who reads through these pages will know whither we are tending in these modern days.