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FORM CRITICISM
AND
THE LIFE OF JESUS

BY

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CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. The Synoptic Problem, and the Emergence of Form Criticism.....	1.
II. An Outline of the "Forms" of Form Criticism.....	7.
III. The Formation and History of the "Forms"...	15.
IV. The Passion Narrative.....	29.
V. The Conclusions of Form Criticism.....	33.
VI. Jesus of History, or Christ of Faith? ..	41.
Index to References.....	47.
Bibliography.....	51.

CHAPTER ONETHE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM, AND EMERGENCE OF FORM CRITICISM

The publication of David Friedrich Strauss's book, "Life of Jesus", in 1835, marked a growing interest in the historicity of the gospels. This book, as typical of the theology of its time, was based on the priority of Matthew's gospel. While Strauss's work was still being acclaimed, Carl Lachmann set about the task of comparing the gospel records. Thus began the study of what has been called the "Synoptic Problem." This study transferred priority from Matthew to Mark. For eighty years the Markan hypothesis prevailed, and Mark was generally credited with a true historical account of the life of Jesus. Papias was claimed to have shown the basis of Mark's gospel, when he is quoted by Eusebius as stating that Mark was an associate of Peter's and received from him the material which he set down in his gospel. This was done, so Papias went on to say, not in chronological order, but rather as the incidents chanced to be narrated by Peter.

William Wrede, of Breslau, was the first one, in 1901, seriously to challenge the authenticity of Mark's gospel as history. Basing his position on the premise that a decided editorial element is present throughout the gospel, to frame it in keeping with the author's doctrine of "The Messianic Secret", Wrede made some startling statements relative to the historicity of the gospel. That the gospel contained good traditions he did not deny, but these were for the most part only of isolated events. The frame-work imposed on the

incidents is the author's own creation, and it is shaped by his doctrine. According to Mark, Jesus, even when on earth, was a supernatural Being, who was recognized and acclaimed by demons, although unrecognized by men. In spite of the demons crying out, and in spite of Jesus' indications by miracles of his supernatural nature, he is unacclaimed by his associates. This appeared to Wrede to be highly impossible, and his conclusion was that Mark was responsible for imposing the claim to Messiahship on the tradition, Jesus never held himself to be the Messiah at all.

Wrede's position was new and not widely accepted. It was characterized in England by Dr. Sanday¹ as "not only very wrong but also distinctly wrong-headed", and "so far as I know, Wrede's reconstruction of the gospel history is accepted by no one." Other scholars were more favorable in their reactions. Johannes Weiss conceded that Mark had edited, had edited sometimes rather freely, yet he was convinced that a historic basis could be found behind the narrative in every section. Julius Wellhausen, whose noted documentary theory of the Old Testament, J. E. D. P., effected such conspicuous results in that field, brought essentially the same approach to the study of the gospel tradition. He is credited by R. H. Lightfoot² with having laid down three important propositions which were decidedly in keeping with Wrede's approach to Mark; firstly, "the book is largely made up of little narratives or sections which at first had

a separate existence, and were later joined together, not necessarily in their historical order, but often rather by similarity of theme. Secondly, the book has been subjected to revision, or revisions, before it reached its present form. Its contents belong to different stages of development. And thirdly, it has information to give, not only of the life of Jesus Christ, but also, to some extent, of the beliefs and circumstances of the early church, at the time when it was written."

Wrede and Wellhausen's work was not followed up until in 1919 Martin Dibelius published his first findings in the study which has become known as Formgeschichte, "Form Criticism", or sometimes, "Form History." Outstanding with Dibelius in the early stages of Form Criticism study was R. Bultmann. In recent years the influence of their work has been widespread. Mr. H. G. Wood, in the Supplement to Peake's Commentary lists a number of English publications which have been influenced by this novel approach. They include Bishop Rawlinson's Mark, (Westminster Commentary Series.); H. J. Cadbury's The Making of Luke-Acts; B. S. Easton's The Gospel Before the Gospels; Hoskins and Davies' The Riddle of the New Testament; Added to these, R. H. Lightfoot in his History and Interpretation in the Gospels, embodying the Bampton Lectures for 1935, bases his whole study on the findings and work of Form Criticism. C. H. Dodd, in his Parables of the Kingdom, assumes the method of Form Criticism as reliable. Branscomb,

in his commentary on Mark, (Moffatt New Testament series), uses the method of Form Criticism throughout. The number of additional books and articles dealing with the subject are too numerous to mention.

The clue for starting the work was the conviction that, during the years following the crucifixion of our Lord and the time when the gospel records were committed to writing, there was a period when the words and deeds of Jesus were preserved in accounts which were handed on from mouth to mouth. The Church, it is claimed, would not have concerned itself with writing history for later generations, since it expected an early consummation of history in the imminent coming of the Kingdom. While the Form Critics differ in their analysis of forms they are unanimous in their convictions that during this early period the sayings and deeds of Jesus were preserved in oral tradition. It is the basis of their contention, too, that this tradition, in being preserved orally, was crystallized into certain forms. These forms were determined by the use made of the material in the churches. This oral tradition, and its method of development is compared to the normal growth of a saga or poem in primitive communities.

Martin Dibelius, the pioneer exponent of Form Criticism as applied to New Testament study, lays down what he terms³ "Fundamental Hypothesis of Form Criticism" As he is the pioneer, and probably the foremost exponent, it is worth

noting his "fundamental hypothesis." First, "When we trace the tradition back to its initial stage we find no descriptions of the life of Jesus, but short, separate paragraphs or pericopae." Substantiating this hypothesis, he claims that, "Mark shows clearly it is really a composition of different small units." So also, he claims, is the Sermon on the Mount. Second, writers of the first tradition had no historical interest, since they did not think in terms of posterity, due to their eschatological convictions, but wrote for purposes of preaching. These purposes included:

- A. Missionary preaching to the unconverted,
- B. Edification of believers,
- C. Instruction to catechumens.

St. Luke's prologue is cited to show this last classification, where Luke refers to the things in which his reader, Theophilus, has been instructed. From these hypotheses it is concluded that the tradition circulated at first chiefly in two forms, in the form of separate stories, and of sayings of the Lord. Regarding the effect of the uses made of the material on the material itself, Dibelius says, "The manner in which the doings of Jesus were narrated was determined by the requirements of the sermon;"⁴ and again, "the teaching material" was "shaped and directed for the purposes which it should serve... with the subject of the sermon, and the actual interests of the life of the Church introduced."⁵

It will thus be seen that Form Criticism, as Lightfoot

points out, has "to work backwards, analytically, from our gospels as we have them; but tries also... to develop a constructive method, which will account, from our knowledge of the early Church, for the origin of the little units, the needs they were designed to serve, and - a point of great importance - the developments they underwent, until they found their final form as part of the structure of the gospels." ⁶ The "analytical" approach and the "constructive" approach would seem to be closely interwoven and inseparable, yet it is in the constructive area where the widest differences appear. It has been urged by some that Form Criticism has a valid field in the analytical work of "form criticism"; but in the constructive field, which builds upon this analysis, and attempts to discover the developments through which the tradition went, or its historicity, we have a new field, that of "form history." In this field, it is claimed, the Form Critics, with their method of examining and breaking up the records into these separate forms, have an inadequate method. The fact that a gospel, that of Mark for instance, can be broken up into units does not give the Form Critic the criterion to make judgement on the historicity of the units.

But let us proceed next to see the analytical work, the forms as given by their different exponents, before we go on to an appraisal of the conclusions about these forms.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OUTLINE OF THE "FORMS" OF FORM CRITICISM.

As we have seen, the background of M. Dibelius' divisions is afforded by his conviction that the "missionary purpose * was the cause and preaching the means" ¹ of the gospel material being preserved. His classification of forms will be understood better if his outline of preaching is recorded. He claims that the form of the sermon consisted of; (1) Kerygma or message; (2) Exhortation to repentance. ² Not only is this the natural and effective construction, but he supports it by comparison with the sermons of Peter and Paul to the Gentiles in the book of Acts. These consist of the three elements, Kerygma, Scriptural proof, and exhortation. Preaching was always done with a view to bringing the hearers the experience of salvation brought in Jesus. The gospel stories, then, are to be regarded as units, or pericopae, and used in mission preaching and confirming that preaching. One large unit will be considered separately, i.e., the Passion Narrative.

The first of these units Dibelius names the Paradigm or model. Originally the paradigm existed in isolation, therefore its connection in the gospel record is the result of the editor's work. Characteristics of the paradigm include, brevity and simplicity, and a lack of portraiture of characters except where absolutely necessary. "What we learn, and are intended to learn, is how Jesus acted on these

occasions." ³ Many a paradigm reaches its point in, and at the same time concludes with, a word of Jesus. These would be useful for preaching purposes. Frequently the paradigm ends with an "exclamation of the onlookers praising the act." ⁴

While many paradigms are to be found in the gospels, most of them are edited and not in their earliest form. Dibelius finds seven in relatively pure form in Mark. They are; Healing the paralytic, 2:1-12; Fasting, 2:18-22; Plucking grain on the Sabbath, 2:23-28; Sabbath healing, 3:1-6; Jesus' relatives, 3:20ff, 31-35; the children, 10:13-16; the tribute money, 12:13-17; and possibly the anointing at Bethany, 14:3ff. We gain the impression that the chief characteristic of the paradigm is that the scene described serves as the setting for an important utterance of Jesus. In their earliest form, Dibelius believes, these utterances of Jesus were of a particular nature. They have been generalized by the editors.

The second form discovered in the gospel narratives by Dibelius is the Tale or Novellen. These are stories, told with description and a certain pleasure in the narrative itself. Characteristics of the tales as set forth by Dibelius include;

- (1) They are individual stories complete in themselves.
- (2) Evangelists included tales with remarks of a pragmatic character, i.e., as examples for wonder-workers and miracles of the apostolic age.

- (3) A lack of devotional motives and the gradual retreat of any words of Jesus of a general value.
- (4) Tales deal with Jesus the miracle-worker. This according to Dibelius is the key to understanding these stories.
- (5) Conclusions contain no didactic.
- (6) Description of the technique of the miracle-worker and literary style in reporting the miracle.

Altogether nine Tales are discovered in Mark: the leper, 1:40-45; the storm, 4:35-41; demons and swine, 5:1-10; daughter of Jairus and the woman with the issue, 5:21-43; feeding the five thousand, 6:35-44; walking on the sea, 6:45-52; man deaf and dumb, 7:32-37; the blind man of Bethsaida, 8:22-26; and the epileptic boy, 9:14-29.

Dibelius estimates their significance for the first century Christian community, claiming, "they were too long and partly too secular for... sermons as illustrations. They were intended to prove the miracle-worker as a epiphany of God, and this was done by the tale as such apart from inclusion in the sermon."⁵

Among the other forms which Dibelius discovers is the "Legend." These are "interested in secondary things and persons ... All sorts of people surrounding Jesus are put forward, the future significance of Jesus is shown during His childhood, and exemplary thoughts and deeds of religious men are brought out. But legends leave it in the background that Jesus had waged war upon Jewish religiousness, that His appearance

simply did not correspond to the wishes of pious Jews, and that He was attacked rather than admired." ⁶ Examples of this classification are numerous. Some of them will be considered later in the chapter dealing with the constructive approach of Form Criticism.

Dibelius believes an abbreviated form of "Q" existed at an early date. These sayings of Jesus had been collected to form a "paranesis" or moral code. These sayings, he claims, were collected for parnetic or hortatory purposes. He shows how, in the writings of Paul, Peter, and James, etc., there are occasions when we come on short pithy sayings or precepts which are obviously based on this "paranesis." Paul, in I Cor. 7:25, explicitly states that on the matter concerned he has "no commandment of the Lord."

Further minor forms include the case where a saying is dramatized, as he believes, into an event, thus, the answer to the question as to which is the greatest commandment. An "epiphany" is the name given to stories where Jesus is pictured as revealing himself to the chosen few, while unidentified by the public, e.g., the miraculous feedings; wishing to pass by the disciples when walking on the water; and appearing to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Finally, Dibelius allows for "myths", which tell of the deeds of divine persons, and thereby explain some cosmic phenomenon, or observance of a cult. Some of these may have been transferred from current literature to Jesus. In this class

and
 are the Baptism, the temptation, the Transfiguration stories.
 Here "he (Jesus) is to be regarded not as a magician able to
 do this or that... things which other people cannot do... but
 as a man in whom God becomes 'epiphthanos'---revealed."

Such is the analytical approach and findings of Dibelius.
 Such are his divisions and forms, taken without appraisal of
 their historical value. This will be considered later.

R. Bultmann comes even to the analytical study with a
 different approach. His contention is that the gospel
 records should be approached without "hypothesis" and with-
 out any preconceived ideas about the uses made of the gospel
 material in the early church. Bultmann's method is based on
 the conviction that all conclusions must be founded on the
 actual forms found in the gospels.

He discovers among the forms, first the Apophthegmata,
 this name being taken from Greek literary history. The apoph-
 thegmata or "apophthegm", as it has been called, is described
 as "portraying a minor scene which furnishes the framework
 for an important utterance... the important thing is the
 utterance itself." ⁷ The apophthegm corresponds to Dibelius'
 paradigm, although Bultmann goes further than Dibelius and
 differentiates; (1) Dialogues introduced by enemies; (2)
 dialogues introduced by friendly inquirers; (3) dialogues
 introduced by an incident. In this group Bultmann lists
 twenty-four stories, among them; the paralytic, Mark2:3ff.;
 eating with publicans and sinners, 11:15ff.; the question

of fasting, 2:18ff.; cornfields on the Sabbath, 2:23ff.; clean and unclean, 7:5ff.; divorce, 10:2ff.; rich man, 10:17ff.; sons of Zebedee, 10:35ff.; the great commandment, 12:28ff. The chief characteristic of these is that the stories culminate in a saying of Jesus, which expresses some ethical or religious precept. The stories are marked by lack of interest in incidental features. Although this is essentially the same characteristic as Dibelius paradigm, Bultmann includes a larger number in his list.

Corresponding to Dibelius' Novellen, or Tales, Bultmann finds "Miracle Stories." While Dibelius sets down their use in preaching, i.e., to show Jesus as worker of supernatural deeds and Jesus the miracle-worker, Bultmann stays with his own method of approach. He takes the miracle stories as they are in the gospels, and finds them similar to Palestinian and Hellenistic miracle stories. He points out that their structure is parallel in the following respects; (1) the nature of the illness is described and reference may be made to its grievous nature, and to previous efforts at a cure, which have failed, and frequently mention is made of doubt or scorn displayed by the onlookers toward the healer; (2) In the account of the healing itself, which forms the climax of the story, great interest may be shown in its method, whether it be by laying on of hands, or the use of some substance, such as spittle, or the use of a formula of words; (3) Emphasis is frequently laid in the conclusion

on the completeness of the cure. Bultmann's view is that the miracle stories were designed as proofs of the Messianic power of Jesus. They were "unmotivated", i.e., they were not done out of pity or to awaken faith.

Corresponding to the material which Dibelius classifies as the "paranesis" Bultmann discovers a group of sayings which he subdivides into five classes: (1) Parables; (2) Logia or wisdom words; (3) Prophetic and Apocalyptic words; (4) Law words and community rules; (5) "I-words."

A fourth large group according to Bultmann is the group he calls "legends." He adds to the instances of the Baptism, Transfiguration, and Resurrection, which Dibelius lists as myths, such narratives as the activity of the Baptist, the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the entry into Jerusalem, most of the Passion stories, the Resurrection narratives, and Matthew and Luke's accounts of the birth.

Bultmann agrees with Dibelius in the conclusion that the Passion narrative must have been a continuous whole from an early date.

Such in brief is the analytical work of these two chief exponents of Form Criticism, as they seek to examine the gospel records, and find the forms in which the earliest traditions were expressed. Other investigators and writers have confined themselves largely to the divisions, or forms suggested by these pioneers. For that reason we can proceed to the conclusions drawn from the breaking up of the gospel

records into these separate units or forms.

CHAPTER THREETHE FORMATION AND HISTORY OF THE FORMS.

The constructive aspect of the form critic's work, might be described as an attempt to arrive at the historical value of the forms. It therefore includes, on the part of Dibelius, with his predilection for the preaching needs of the Church, an effort to discover the uses made of the units in preaching, changes and developments likely to take place in the light of these. For both Bultmann and Dibelius there is the work of comparing the development of the tradition with parallel literature. And from all this evidence, conjectures are made as to the historical value of the units, as well as of the gospels as a whole.

Remembering that the basis of the study is that the forms and units circulated in isolation, and that the connecting links are editorial, we may note the estimate of the historical value of the forms. Dibelius is inclined to regard the paradigm, or the central saying of the paradigm, as of decided historical value, claiming¹ that the historicity of the paradigm is illustrated frequently by additional editorial notes reconciling the contents with Church practice, e.g., Mark 2:18, where after the statement explaining why his disciples do not fast, the justification of the Church's practice of fasting is given in v. 20. Dibelius also points out that the saying of Jesus, or the core of the paradigm, is very likely to be authentic,

since it is not contradicted by the "eyewitnesses", whom Luke mentions, as well as the "Preachers", who kept the paradigm in circulation. Dibelius, as already noted, claims that some pronouncements of Jesus, which must have been of a particular nature, have in their present form been altered to form a general rule. But behind the paradigms he believes we can depend on some word or incident in the life of Jesus which is authentic.

Bultmann's conclusions regarding the historical basis of the apophthegmata are complicated by his sub-divisions, and are to some extent prejudiced by his preoccupation with comparisons with Jewish and Hellenistic parallels. He agrees with Dibelius in claiming that frequently the saying of Jesus has been elaborated to justify Church practice, thus, "We therefore conclude that... where the answer receives further elaboration, the elaborating words are a secondary contribution. This is undoubtedly the case in Mark 2:19,20, where the question... is elaborated as follows, 'So long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast; but the days will come when the bride groom shall be taken from them, and then will they fast in that day.' The content of these words reenforces this conclusion, for they contain an allegorical prophecy of the death of Jesus and a justification of the later custom of fasting in the Christian community."

Bultman sees the form of the controversial dialogues showing "that this part of the tradition originated in the

primitive Palestinian community." ³ Reverting to his practice of drawing conclusions from comparisons, he writes, "These controversial passages, then, precisely as in the case of rabbinical utterances, were transmitted, not as historical narratives, but as polemic and apologetic material. It is therefore incorrect to regard these controversial utterances as accounts of actual scenes in the life of Jesus."⁴ His conclusion is, "There is no reason to doubt that many genuine utterances attributed to Jesus in these discourses rest back upon accurate historical recollection; but it must also be admitted that the scenes depicted in them are not to be taken as narratives of actual events."⁵

The biological apophthegmata can no more be taken as actual historical scenes. "These are pictorial creations of the Christian community, in which is brought to clear expression what the community held to be the character of their Master, what they experienced in relation to Him, or how he fared in popular estimation."⁶ Thus, for instance, the stories of the calling of the disciples from their occupation as fishermen, "lack entirely any portrayal of adequate motives or historical verisimilitude."⁷ Thus too the preaching and rejection at Nazareth "is a symbolic picture which vividly represents the attitude of the people as a whole to the preaching of Jesus."⁸

Dibelius' appraisal of the the paradigms would seem to be a fair one. Evidences are not lacking to show that

statements were added to to justify Church practice, and to explain a saying, as in the case of the sign regarding the "Son of Man" being in the grave. We have every reason to believe, too, in the presence of eyewitnesses. Besides the fact that the sayings in the paradigms had to be added to, to justify Church practice, argues for their historical authenticity.

Bultmann's more extreme position with regard to the controversial apophthegmata leaves out of account the likelihood of eyewitnesses who would have knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the controversy. As Vincent Taylor puts it, Bultmann's radicalism prompts him "frequently to be kinder to the possibility than to the probabilities of things." ⁹ His position with regard to the biographical apophthegmata is rather overdone. To relegate such an account as the rejection at Nazareth to a picture of how Jesus fared with his fellow-men, is hard to accept. Fascher's criticism of Bultmann, quoted by Vincent Taylor, has weight at this point; claiming "It is really a question of what demands we make in respect of a historical report" Taylor quotes Fascher, "If it must look like a legal formula, or a registration of evidence which catalogues with exaggerated precision every trivial detail, there is no historical account in the entire New Testament, or indeed in most of our other historical sources. But if we are of the opinion that a report is historical, which records that which is essential, we shall

10

recognize many of them." Taylor asks some pertinent questions relative to Bultmann's claim that the controversial apophthegmata were transmitted, not as historical narratives, but as polemic and apologetic material; "Why do they not increase in number as time passes, and as new problems confront the growing Church? Why is there no 'pronouncement-story' about the necessity of the cross, or the Gentile mission, or the foundation or organization of the Church... If Bultmann is right, Christian imagination was potent where it was least needed, feeble or wanting where silence call for its exercise; it left undone the things it ought to have done, and did the things it has no

11

need to do." Taylor is of the opinion, and rightly so I believe, that "far then from acquiescing in any denial of the historical element in these stories, we ought rather to esteem them among the strongest and most stable elements in the gospel tradition... they are those which met immediate needs and were most easily remembered; yet none the less they give a singularly living portraiture of Jesus the Teacher, and Prophet; and for us as for the first Christians, preserve words final for guidance among thorny problems of conduct and faith."

12

The novellen, or tales, Dibelius believes, as a whole are "less historical than the paradigm... Nevertheless historical foundations or commencements may be presupposed when a Paradigm is the basis of a Tale, and only when a non-Christian

story seems to be probable as the original of a Christian tale, is the reliability of the Christian narrative brought into question." ¹³ As examples of this last, Dibelius cites the cases of casting out the demons into the swine, and the marriage at Cana. Dibelius holds that the tales were the stock-in-trade of story-tellers, rather than preachers, and sees "historical significance" in the tales in the sense that they represent the idea of Christ as worshipped by the first century Christian community, also that examples of his cures and miracles of healing served as examples to Christian miracle-workers.

In presenting Bultmann's constructive study of the miracle stories, we must anticipate a future consideration, and state that he accepts Wrede's theory of the doctrinal basis of the "Messianic Secret." Bultmann is prepared to accept Jesus as a prophet and a lawgiver, but believes the Messianic role was the concept of the Christian community. The miracle stories were told, then, to awaken and strengthen faith in Jesus the miracle-working Messiah. He finds most of the miracle stories taking form in Hellenistic soil, although a few may be characterized as Palestinian. His numerous comparisons with Hellenistic and Palestinian miracle stories are cited as showing the atmosphere in which the synoptic accounts took shape. The question of their historical value he does not deal with, except by showing the parallels in current literature, and presumably assuming that they can

be attributed entirely to the doctrinal motive of the Messianic secret, and therefore are of little or no historical value.

Dibelius again is more conservative, and more plausible. His judgement that some of the miracle stories, such as the Demoniacs and the swine, and the Wedding of Cana, have been transferred from non-Christian sources is in keeping with a suspicion which we have entertained for some time. But it does seem likely that where paradigms are the basis of a tale, then some historical foundation may be supposed. Bultmann does less than justice, when he infers no historical value after he has completed his practice of comparison with Hellenistic and Rabbinic parallels.

In appraising the historical value of that body of material, the sayings, or an abbreviated "Q", Dibelius sees different reliability in those sayings which are hortatory and those which are paranetic; "We must first of all point out that tradition preserved numerous works of an hortatory content. This corresponds doubtless to a large extent to the nature of Jesus preaching." ¹⁴ Included in these are maxims (proverbs), metaphor, parabolic narrative, prophetic call (beatitude, woe, eschatological preaching), short commandment, extended commandment given with a basis like Matthew 5:44ff. "The paranetic value placed on the words of Jesus has occasionally altered their content. The prohibition of divorce in the Gospel, as the sayings of Mark 10:9,

and Luke 16:18 show, is radical and unconditional, but is to be understood as a fundamental requirement from the eschatological standpoint. In Matthew it stands as a rule for the Church, and therefore an exception is foreseen. Adultery of one partner makes divorce possible even for Christians. (Matthew 5:32; 9:9)¹⁵ Doubtless this is the case, and repeatedly the Church would have to deal with the attempt to make an impossible ethical ideal into a practical and moral exhortation.

The great parables in Luke,- the Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Unjust Steward, Pharisee and Publican, Great Feast; and in Matthew,- the Laborers in the Vineyard, and the Talents, are contrasted by Dibelius with the short didactic narratives. In this they appear as "popular compositions with a well defined style, and the epic laws of folk poetry can be observed in them in large measure."¹⁶ It is conceded as likely that Jesus sometimes took an already known story and gave it new meaning. On the whole, though, a comparison of the parables with Jewish ones reveals, not that they depend upon them, but that they had a "Common life and view point."¹⁷ Dibelius holds that, on the one hand, there was the tendency of the Church to derive as much exhortation as possible from the words of Jesus, and this tendency must have affected the handing down of the parables. On the other hand, we owe their preservation to the fact that there were these hortatory possibilities, and they were

consequently used in preaching. One group of sayings are comparatively free from parabolic transformation. These are the prophetic exclamations, and certain words in the first person.

Dibelius' constructive approach does add considerably to a true estimate of the historicity of the sayings of Jesus. The transforming influence of the Church is generally conceded, and indeed it is apparent in many cases, e.g., the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:2ff., and of the Deceitful Steward, Luke 16:1ff. On the other hand, kernels of the sayings are not to be accounted for by relegating them to the status of community productions.

Bultmann's more clearly defined classification of the sayings of Jesus does not lead him far from Dibelius in his conclusions. Regarding the Parables he agrees, adding that comparison of the gospel with Rabbinic parables demonstrates that the interpretation of them as "predictive allegories is a false one."¹⁸

Regarding the "Proverbs", such as Matthew 12:34b, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"; Matthew 6:34b, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," etc., Bultmann, after comparing them to Jewish wisdom literature, concludes: "It is naturally possible that Jesus himself originated some of the wisdom-sayings which the gospels record as spoken by him... But it is quite clear that we must reckon with the possibility that the primitive community placed in

his mouth many a beautiful saying that was really derived from the treasure of Jewish proverbial lore... it is these Wisdom-sayings that are least guaranteed to be authentic words of Jesus." ¹⁹ Here Bultmann is much more extreme than Dibelius. Admitting his contention that their context or connection was created by the later tradition, we may still question whether he is not approaching them with a predilection to doubting, and embracing the possibility rather than the probability. Dibelius' opinion that "They correspond doubtless to a large extent to the nature of Jesus preaching" ²⁰ admits the likelihood of additions, but does find historical value in the proverbs. I would choose to be associated with Dibelius' more generous and reasonable position.

Some of the prophetic and apocalyptic sayings are found by Bultmann to be "obviously not typical products of apocalyptic fancy, but original utterances of a prophetic personality." ²¹ But still the prophetic spirit was alive in the early Church, and much has been added in this way. Thus Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock;" Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I come as a thief." In the gospels, similar examples are to be found in Matthew 10:16a, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves,": Luke 10:19,20, "Behold, I give you power to tread on scorpions." Some sayings have been supplemented, such as the benediction of the persecuted,

Luke 6:22,23. Besides these, of course, a group of sayings have been taken over from Jewish tradition, thus Mark 13:5-27, the "Little Apocalypse", is a Christianized Jewish passage. Luke 11:49-52 and its parallel in Matthew 23:34-36, together with Luke 13:34,35, and the parallel in Matthew 23:37-39, are cited as having probably originated in some Jewish writing. The first case, Luke 11:49ff, "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets... may be required of this generation, etc." does seem likely as having its origin in current Jewish writing. But the second instance, Luke 13:34,35, the lament over Jerusalem, would appear to be rather the work of the Christian community, based on a recollection of a saying of Jesus.

However, in Bultmann's searching analysis of the prophetic sayings, we have to admit fairness. Dibelius does not give a detailed examination, and his results are not so definite.

In sayings regarding the law, such as Mark 7:15, with respect to purity; Matthew 5:21,22,27,28,33-37; Matthew 6:218, with respect to almsgiving, prayer and fasting, Bultmann claims we have sayings with true parallels in the preaching of the old prophets. He sees no likelihood that they could have originated in contemporary Judaism, and therefore concludes, "As a whole these words of conflict with legalism, and expressing a spiritual obedience to the

will of God, go back to the prophetic personality to whom the church owed its existence, that is to the personality of Jesus.²² With less confidence, he claims, can some of the Old Testament citations supporting the controversies with the law, be attributed to Jesus. So also sayings which contain rules for the discipline of the community and for its mission, (Matthew 16:18,19) respecting Peter and the keys; and Matthew 10:5016, directions for the Church's mission; would appear to have arisen first in the Christian community. Here again Bultmann's appraisal of the sayings concerning the law and Church practice is almost self evident.

While we must admit the possibility of his conclusions about the "I-words", that they express the reflective and retrospective point of view, and are therefore to be attributed to the Church, we may question whether there is not another possibility as well. Bultmann finds the "I-words" to be cases in which the "Church expressed its faith in Jesus, his work, his destiny, and his mission."²³ Again, this is revealing the fact that Bultmann attributes to Jesus no Messianic consciousness, and, in assigning all the "I-words" to the Church, he is denying the possibility that Jesus revealed any prophetic consciousness. It appears to me more likely that we have in the "I-words" again, sayings which do go back to sayings of Jesus, but which have been elaborated and shaped by the Church in the light of its subsequent understanding of his work, his destiny, and his person.

Dibelius' "Legend" covers a large range of stories, about fifty in all the gospels. These "religious narratives of a saintly man in whose works interest is taken" may be divided into aetiological legends proper to the cultus, and personal legends. Dibelius gives many descriptions of the legends, but the self evident truth is that these stories conform to no one fixed form: they are simply "religious" stories. Some, although comparatively few, deal with miraculous deliverances (in Nazareth at the outset of his ministry), still others are cult legends (story of the Last Supper), showing precepts for Church practice. In this sense they are characterized as aetiological. Dibelius' appraisal of the historical value of legends is given in general and does not arrive at any particular conclusion! He speaks of the legends of the records as corresponding closely to the nature of legendary biography in other quarters; but although striking similarities are to be found, he concludes, "On the other hand it would be wrong to deny historical content to every legend. A narrator of legends is certainly not interested in historical confirmation, nor does he offer any opposition to increasing the material by analogies. But how much historical tradition he hands on in a legend depends on the character of his tradition.... A legendary form as such is in any case no decisive objection against the historicity of the hero, or even of an event, although again it is no guarantee for the faithfulness of the

record to the truth." ²⁴ Such is Dibelius' unsettled settlement of the historicity of legends. However, the very choice of name for this class suggests a lack of historical value. Vincent Taylor's objection to the use of this name ²⁵ is a just one. His caption, "Stories about Jesus," is an improvement.

Included in Bultmann's legends are the Baptism, Temptation, and Transfiguration, which Dibelius classifies as "Myths". The legends are to be accounted for, according to Bultmann, as the creations of faith. ²⁶ The Transfiguration is seen as probably originally one of the Resurrection stories; so also is Peter's Confession. He sees the "Creation" of the legends as the result of a "variety of motives derived from the Jewish Messianic hope, and from Hellenistic beliefs in a Savior God." ²⁷ Not even the possibility of historical value, which is conceded by Dibelius, is allowed here. Again one cannot escape the impression that this judgement of Bultmann's is determined to a large extent by his denial of any Messianic consciousness on the part of Christ. But, conceding this possibility of such a consciousness, what is more natural than to hold that a basis in historical fact is to be admitted here, and that the myths have been highly colored by the faith of the Church. Probably nothing definite can be decided, but the likelihood has to be determined on the basis of one's opinion as to whether Jesus thought of himself as Messiah or not. This question will be considered in a later chapter.

CHAPTER FOURTHE PASSION NARRATIVE

We may proceed now with the large block of material, "the Passion narrative." Both Dibelius and Bultmann are agreed that the Passion narrative is an exception to the rule that the gospel tradition circulated in separate units or pericopae. It was rather in circulation at an early date as a connected whole. No doubt, in fact quite evidently, additions were made, as evidenced by a casual comparison of the gospels, but even in the gospels there is striking agreement. The main emphasis in preaching was on the Passion and Easter stories. Bultmann quotes M. Kähler as showing essentially the nature of the gospels: "With some exaggeration one might describe the gospels¹ as Passion Narratives with extended introductions." A number of considerations argue for the early existence of this body of material as a connected narrative. Dibelius points out how the interests of apology, of the most primitive theology, and of edification, all served to require the Passion story as a connected whole. Dibelius finds further evidence in the fact that, in the introduction to the Passion in Mark 14:1,2,10,11, the motive of the secret arrest of Jesus is given as the nearness of the feast, while the subsequent narrative shows Jesus and his disciples celebrating the Passover. Dibelius concludes, "Thus, Mark cannot have been the author of the introduction

and, therefore, also not the originator of the connected
 2
 narrative."

Both Bultmann and Dibelius admit that Mark's ~~Mark's~~
 conclusion has been lost. The present ending following
 Mark 16:8 is a later addition.

Dibelius lists what he claims was certainly not in
 the earliest account, but is found in Mark. This alien
 material is marked by its contradiction to the tendencies
 of the older account. His list includes; the Anointing;
 the empty grave; the introduction to the Last Supper,
 Mark 14:12-16; and the second and third prayers of Christ
 in Gethsemene. The fact that eyewitnesses are mentioned
 and named in Mark indicates for Dibelius that this record
 goes back to a pre-Markan record, and would add to the
 historical value.

Old Testament passages obviously find expression in
 the Passion narrative, particularly Psalms 22,31,69, and
 Isaiah 53. On the whole, Dibelius finds this not as
 evidence that the narrative was invented because of these,
 but rather that these were used to show how in the dishon-
 oring and shameful treatment offered to Jesus, the scriptures
 were fulfilled, and thus things happened according to God's
 will. Indeed, we are reminded by the pioneer of Form
 Criticism that the purpose was not historical, in the sense
 of giving the events in historical connection, but the
 purpose here, as in other places, is "to make clear what

in the Passion took place by God's will."³

With some weight, it is pointed out that the restraining influence of historic fact is to be seen in the omission of reference to the piercing of the hands and feet in all of the synoptics. This might have been expected, since it is contained in Psalm 22:16, and in the Easter narratives. This omission argues for the presence of restrictive influences, which prevented wandering from the historic basis.

It is not surprising to find the record of the empty grave referred to as legend, so also the Easter appearances to Peter, and the appearance on the Emmaus road. It these Mark hands down what he has received.

Further consideration of the Passion narratives, as might be expected, runs along a highly sceptical line. His sparing generosity is expressed in these words: "It is quite conceivable that a continuous account of its events would be handed down at a very early period, in which Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane, his condemnation by the Jewish court and by Pilate, the way to the cross, his crucifixion and death were briefly told."⁴

His position with regard to historical value might be summed up in the statement that he finds the Passion and the Resurrection narratives, other than the above historical basis, the work of pious fancy and the evangelist's apologetic interests.

Again I would choose to be associated more closely

with Dibelius' than with Bultmann's conclusions. The fact that the Passion narrative did circulate at an early date, as evidenced by Paul's mention of the narrative as he had received it, and by its incorporation in the synoptics in striking similarity, is a strong argument for its being in essence based on an historical core, rather than being "the work of pious fancy and apologetic interests." The early date of its circulation, plus the suggestion and naming of eyewitnesses (evidently known in the Christian community), are enough to convince me that, although apologetic elaborations and connection links are most certainly present (as in the Last Supper), yet we have some reason to regard the Passion story as substantially based on historic evidence. With less confidence can we claim strong historical value for the Resurrection appearances. The lost ending of Mark, if that gospel did not end at 16:8, no doubt contained record of Jesus' appearance to Peter in Galilee. But the Resurrection narratives do not display any striking similarity, and what is more, their differences can be accounted for largely by the different doctrinal motives. Paul's understanding of the Resurrection was not based on any of the Resurrection appearances recorded in the gospels. Rather it was an inner experience of the resurrected living Christ which he held as essential. All of these facts leave us little room for claiming that the gospel narratives of the Resurrection appearances are historical accounts.

CHAPTER FIVETHE CONCLUSIONS OF FORM CRITICISM

We must now ask some questions which have been suggested previously, but not yet definitely answered. From the analysis of the Form Critics and the developments they contend took place in the tradition before it reached its present form, what knowledge can we have of the Jesus of history? How much can we depend on the records to supply us with an adequate picture of his life and a true account of his words? What was his concept of his work? Was it represented historically in the earliest gospel, Mark, in particular? Does the work of the Form Critics reveal any differences between the positions held by the three synoptists regarding Jesus' mission and methods?

Bultmann's views may be stated first, since he has a clearly defined position which dismisses the questions raised above in short order. In "The Study of the Synoptic Problems," he allows some doubt regarding the Messianic consciousness of Jesus: "Regarding the origin and development of his Messianic consciousness, we are generally speaking, unable to say anything definite. Indeed it must remain questionable whether Jesus regarded himself as Messiah at all, and did not rather first become Messiah in the faith of the Community." ¹ The latter alternative seems to him to be the necessary consequence of the analysis of his words. However, in Jesus the Word, he is quite definite

and would seem to be stating his clear cut position. His words are; "I do indeed think we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus." and, "I am personally of the opinion that Jesus did not believe himself to be the Messiah, but I do not imagine that this opinion gives me a clearer picture of his personality." ² For Bultmann the ministry of Jesus ⁵ can be characterized as that of a prophet. ¹ He is prepared to admit that no single word of Jesus ⁵ can be set down with certainty as authentic, but he does find a series of prophetic words, echoing the call to repentance, which in his mind do give a "consistent representation of the historical message of Jesus."

This is an extremely slender thread which Bultmann leaves. Probably only the theology of an ardent Barthian could exist in the light of this weakening of faith in the records. However, simply to state his position is to reveal how extreme he is, and previous detailed consideration of his treatment of forms will leave no doubt Bultmann exceeds the bounds even of legitimate scepticism. Vincent Taylor probably accounts for his weakness in the best possible way: "I believe that no small part of his 'scepticism' is the painful anxiety of the trained investigator in no way to fail in doing full justice to the formative activity of any community which appeals, and must appeal, to the words of a revered teacher." ³

Dibelius' general conclusions in the light of his

form criticism are quite illuminating. He warns us that "we must remember that the gospels did not intend to and ought not to describe the story of an exemplary saintly person," but apart from a few exceptions "our records refuse an answer if we enquire into them about the character, the 'personality', or the qualities of Jesus."⁴

On the other hand, Dibelius finds that his method of form criticism does enable us to discern those stories which have more historical trustworthiness than others. The paradigms, he believes, are among our best tradition, since they were so closely connected with preaching, and thus "possess a means of protection against unhistorical extensions and other corruptions. Just because the simplest preaching of Jesus itself made use of it, it may be traced back as a category to the generation of eyewitnesses."⁵

The "Tales are only to be used with greatest caution as historical sources,"⁶ although a general evaluation of the tales is not to be achieved, each one needing to be weighed on its own merits. He points out that the tales, though, would not have existed had Jesus not had the reputation of having performed outstanding deeds, "thus, the tales had their point of origin in history."⁷ The legends, too, while incapable of being described as among the most historically reliable, can be said to "Have their final basis in historical reality."⁸ Further, Dibelius points out that the legends are largely free from the favorite theme of

similar stories in secular literature, i.e. miraculous self-deliverance. Again, he concedes the likelihood of eyewitnesses, who made it impossible for the records to wander too far from the historical truth.

Then Dibelius finds the element of doctrine throughout the earliest as well as the other gospels. The gospels, being intended to show, not primarily the historical character of Jesus (biography), but salvation of God through Christ, did so by Old Testament quotation showing especially the Passion as the fulfilment of God's plan, although Matthew does this throughout the whole gospel. They showed salvation of God through Christ further by the tales, which portrayed One with supernatural authority at work, and by the legends as well, which showed God's act of revealing. But confronted with the fact that the people did not recognize Jesus, but rather did him to death, Mark solved the contradiction by his theory of the Messianic secret. "He put, not only the great miracles, but the whole activity of Jesus under the standpoint of a secret epiphany." ⁹ Mark's doctrine of the Messianic secret is compared to John's doctrine, where the treatment meted to Jesus and lack of acclaim is attributed to the perverse misunderstanding of the people.

Dibelius thus builds up a good case. It appears quite true that in the paradigms we have the best historical tradition. That the legends and tales have a

basis in historical reality, since eyewitnesses would form a check, does lend weight to them even though one bears in mind that they certainly have been elaborated to a large extent by Christian faith. The Messianic secret is presented as a necessary outcome of the predicament the compilers of the records faced, and its evidences are too plain to be questioned.

Before concluding this work, with an appraisal of the contribution of the form critics, mention should be made here of the elaborate thesis built up by R. H. Lightfoot regarding the Messianic secret. He traces this doctrine and its development in the gospel in great detail, and leaves the impression that this can be attributed entirely to the writers doctrinal motive, and is unhistorical. Accordingly, the gospel begins with a prologue setting forth Jesus Christ, the Son of God, baptized of John at Jordan, where Christ is proclaimed the figure for the Messianic role. This is followed by the temptation in the wilderness for forty days, this being parallel to the temptation of old Israel for forty years in the wilderness. But whereas the old Israel failed, the New Israel is victorious. Then, the Messianic secret is carried through, "Only towards the close is it set forth by St. Peter, but at once the same injunction of secrecy or silence is laid upon the disciples as previously upon the demons; and the only result of the insight which the disciples now have,

is that they are able to receive instruction in the meaning and duties of Messiahship, and in the implications for themselves. Not until the trial, a few hours before the end, does Jesus in St. Mark admit his Messiahship in the presence of the rulers of his nation.¹⁰ In keeping with this, the parables are secret revealings to those who have ears to hear, but their meaning is hidden from the people. Mark's doctrine is seen to be further worked out in the development where, after Peter's confession at Caesarea, there is no more mention of the confession of the demons, and the acts of power practically cease. The entry into Jerusalem carries still further Mark's doctrinal interests. Bartimaeus addressed Jesus as Son of God, and is ordered by the crowd to be silent. The incident of sending the disciples for the colt and the acclaim given as Jesus rode into Jerusalem... these are all indicated by Lightfoot as features of the narrative in which Mark works out his doctrine, and in which the readers would "discern by faith the coming of the Messianic king prophesied in scripture."¹¹ In the death of Jesus further evidence is discovered. Thus the centurion's confession becomes the recognition in public of the Messiah Jesus, "by a Gentile, the last person who might have been expected to proclaim it."¹² Lightfoot is not certain of the implication of the rending of the temple veil, except that it signifies the removal of a barrier, whatever it may be. Mark's doctrinal motive in presenting the centurion's

confession, "Truly this man was Son of God.", is shown by contrast to Luke's account of the incident, where Luke, according to his doctrine of Christ the martyr, has the centurion recorded as saying, "Assuredly this was a righteous man."

E. F. Scott in his Validity of the Gospel Records, is altogether too conservative in his judgement about Form Criticism, yet his remarks in connection with Lightfoot's thesis of the Messianic secret are not far from the mark. "It is difficult to credit Mark with this abstruse doctrinal purpose, which would certainly be missed by his early readers, as by every one since, except some ingenious critics in the twentieth century... If he sought to introduce a new and more profound Christology his intention was not perceived by the other two evangelists who apparently thought him defective at this very point."¹³ We may question whether Scott is right in saying that the doctrinal purpose would have been entirely missed by his earliest readers, but still he is right in suggesting that the ingenious critic of the twentieth century is the only one who has seen it so thoroughly predominating the record. Lightfoot's thesis credits the editor of Mark's gospel with literary motives and executions entirely beyond reason. We may admit that Mark has heightened the idea of the Messianic secret, but still ask whether Jesus did not think of himself as the Messiah, and did not keep it quiet for a

time. Dibelius does not deal with the question of whether or not Jesus thought of himself as Messiah. On this he evidently reserves judgement. Bultmann, implicitly in some places, and explicitly in other places, denies any Messianic consciousness. Personally I cannot conceive even of those sayings and events which Form Criticism establishes as reasonably reliable, unless there was an assumption of the Messianic role by Christ. That this was conceived by him differently to the current Jewish idea of it, that the disciples did not fully understand it and might have precipitated some unwise action had it been known to them sooner, and that Jesus would therefore keep it secret, do all seem likely and therefore invest the record of Mark in its treatment of this question, with something more than just doctrinal motive.

CHAPTER SIXJESUS OF HISTORY, OR CHRIST OF FAITH?

What has the work of the form critics established for us? Can we hope to find in the gospels a portrait of the Jesus of history or only that of the Christ of faith? Have the form critics proved their right to establish either one?

We may concede that the method of Form Criticism is not the only way of arriving at an historical evaluation of the gospels, but it has certainly added considerably to a fair understanding of the records as we have them. In the first place, it has thrown light on the hinterlands, showing to some extent the life and activities of the Christian community during the years between the crucifixion and the compilation of the gospels. That the tradition was preserved through its use in the communities for preaching, controversial and inspirational purposes, I think is beyond question. Beyond question, too, is the evidence supplied that the Christian community has formed the tradition, and in its formation has most certainly influenced it.

¹
B. S. Easton objects to the attempts of form critics to show how far the community did influence the tradition. His contention is that here we have the field of Form History, in which the form critics are not competent. Vincent Taylor in a more reserved way urges a similar position, when he questions the form critics' appraisal
²
of Mark 2:19ff., and regards this constructive work

as very speculative. We may admit Easton's claim to a place for Form History, and Taylor's right to sound a warning that in appraising their material the form critics are in a speculative area, but to discover the forms, as form critics do, is incidentally to invite some attempt to estimate the alterations and additions. It seems to me quite reasonable to estimate this work of the community, and the analysis of the form critics given above establishes their right to make appraisals in this field. Vincent Taylor does less than justice to Dibelius, when he criticises him on the basis of neglecting eyewitnesses. His charge is against form critics in general when he states, "If Form Critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the Resurrection."³ Bultmann admittedly does dismiss the possibility of eyewitnesses exercising any curbing effect on the records. But Dibelius does not. He is of the opinion that paradigms as a category may be traced back to eyewitnesses, and discovers the restraining influence of the eyewitnesses in keeping the legends and tales from wandering too far from reality.

I do believe Bultmann is too extreme in his work of analysing and comparing and then leaving the inference, as he does so frequently, that these processes have dismissed the question of historical value, except in a few sayings of a prophetic personality.

However, Dibelius does appear to build on solid ground, discovering paradigms as most historically reliable, and legends and tales as based on the historical work of Jesus. In these he admits the increased influence of the community without dismissing them as entirely unreliable as historical material.

Divided as they are in their analysis of forms, and their appraisal of the historical value of them, the form critics have given a valuable lead. They have not said the last word, but they have pushed on in the attempt to understand the tradition. Although I have not chosen to be identified with him, I think Bultmann has performed valuable service here, as well as his more plausible fellow pioneer in the field.

I should say they have established the fact that, much as we would like it to be otherwise, what we have in the gospel records is not the Jesus of history but primarily the Christ of faith. And at the same time it may be added, but this Christ of faith is remarkably close to the Jesus of history.

We cannot hold that the gospels are biography, or even that Mark in its entirety is generally historical. Mark is now shown to be a composite, made up of all the different forms, with their differing historical reliability. It is demonstrated as being similar, if not parallel to John, in setting forth the material in a doctrinal framework.

Gone, too must be the attempts to show a consecutive account of Jesus' life using the connecting links as found in the gospels. These editorial connections cannot be regarded as of historical importance. Vincent Taylor's attempt to establish some basis for the connecting links in passages like Mark 4:35-5:43 does not alter the situation. We may have here an apparent framework, which is consistent, but the truth would seem to be that the form critics have discredited the possibility of setting forth the sayings and deeds in historical sequence. C. H. Dodd⁴ is not willing to grant the claim that all the gospel writers had was a series of separate pericopae. Besides these, he believes, the tradition furnished larger complexes, some in the form of an itineracy and others strung together by similarity of theme. Then too, he is convinced, there was a brief outline of the whole ministry, designed probably as an introduction to the Passion story. Be that as it may, and it is possible, we still have to despair of the old belief that we can set down, with any degree of accuracy, a biography of Jesus.

The combined findings of the form critics, regarding the doctrinal motive of Mark's Messianic secret, leave little room for us to deny this element in the first gospel. As shown above, it is all too evident. But we may question whether the account, which is thus regarded as doctrine, does not correspond to the fact. If the presupposition is

that Jesus did not think of himself as Messiah, but only as a prophet, then obviously the doctrine in Mark is only doctrine. But if the presupposition is that Christ did assume the Messianic role, so central in the religion of his fathers, then we may regard the record as something more than just doctrine. But this is simply to call attention to the fact that our predilection will affect our understanding and appraisal of the records, and further, that what we have even in the earliest gospel is not primarily a portrait of the Jesus of history, but of the Christ as he was held in the faith of the early Church.

Considerable injustice has been done by swinging to extremes in drawing conclusions from the work of the form critics. Professor E. F. Scott poses his crucial question in this fashion, "Is this account of Jesus historical, or must we seek its origin in the pious fancy of the Church?"⁵ Needless to say, Scott rejects the latter alternative, and then accepts the former. Lightfoot gives the case away in his concluding paragraph of his Bampton lectures, 1934, when he concludes, "It seems, then, that the form of the earthly, no less than the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice, in them we trace but the outskirts of his ways." Extreme positions and alternatives,

such as these, do not represent the only position left.

Rather I have stated that, although we have the Christ of faith set forth in the gospels, yet that picture is remarkably close to the Jesus of history. Additions have crept in, the miraculous has been heightened, sayings have been generalized, connecting links have been supplied, apologetic interests have been at work; nevertheless what we have left is a remarkably consistent picture of a Life which has lived in the minds of millions of men and women as the Word of God. It is inconceivable that this is the work of "pious fancy", or that the community created it. It created the community.

The years which intervened between the crucifixion and the compilation of Mark's gospel, when the tradition circulated orally, saw the sayings and deeds of Jesus cherished and circulated in a variety of forms, for their value to the Church, not to posterity. When Mark wrote he had to do with the tradition which held Jesus as he then lived, the Christ of faith. But the very use of the tradition in the Church, the unliterary character of the early community, the presence of eyewitnesses who would prevent wandering from the truth, and the singularly consistent picture of Christ in the gospels, all argue for the Christ of faith being reliably like the Jesus who lived and walked among men.

INDEX TO REFERENCESCHAPTER ONE

PAGE

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 Gospels. P. 23.
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 Gospels, P. 31.

CHAPTER TWO

- 7, (1) Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, P. 13.
 (2) " " " " " " P. 17.
- 8, (3) " " " " " " P. 50.
 (4) " " " " " " P. 58.
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CHAPTER THREE

PAGE

26. (23) Bultmann, in Grant's Form Criticism, P.59
28. (24) Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, P.100
- (25) Vincent Taylor, Formation of the Gospel Tradition, P.142
- (26) Bultmann, in Grant's Form Criticism, P.68
- (27) " " " " " P.69

CHAPTER FOUR

29. (1) Bultmann, in Grant's Form Criticism, P.65
30. (2) Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, P.181
31. (3) " " " " 2" " P.186
- (4) Bultmann, in Grant's Form Criticism, P.65

CHAPTER FIVE

33. (1) Bultmann, in Grant's Form Criticism, P.71
34. (2) Bultmann, Jesus the Word, P.15
- (3) Vincent Taylor, Formation of the Gospel Tradition, P.15
35. (4) Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, P. 300-301
- (5) " " " " " P. 290
- (6) " " " " " P. 292
- (7) " " " " " P. 292
- (8) " " " " " P. 293

CHAPTER FIVE

PAGE.

- 36, (9) Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel, P. 297
- 38, (10) R. H. Lightfoot, History and Interpretation in the Gospels, P. 67
- (11) " " " " " " " " P. 83
- (12) " " " " " " " " P. 85
- 39, (13) E. F. Scott, The Validity of the Gospel Record,
P. 33,34

CHAPTER SIX

- 41, (1) B. S. Easton, The Gospel Before the Gospels, P. 80-81
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- 42, (3) " " " " " " " " P.41
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"The Life and Teaching of Jesus." H. G. Wood.