

**LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS,
ACCORDING TO THE HISTORICAL AND
CRITICAL METHOD. BEING
A COURSE OF LECTURES. TRANSLATED
FROM THE THIRD UNALTERED EDITION
BY H. J. WHITBY**

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RUDOLPH OTTO

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According to the *Life and Writings*

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Rudolph Otto, Lic. Th.

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PREFACE.

Two images of the life and the ministry of Jesus confront us to-day; the ecclesiastical image, which is the product of unsifted matter, and the critical, which is the product of matter that has passed the ordeal of the critical and historical method. A few friends of the Church in Hanover desired to acquire, in outline at least, a knowledge of this latter. This led to the preparation and finally to the publication of these lectures. The wisdom of venturing a sketch, where a complete picture was necessary, of "popularizing" sciences which were as yet hardly complete, of saying things that might perhaps create danger and unrest, may well be questioned. Such considerations led the lecturer to permit at first only a limited and manuscript impression of them. But the need of reforming and developing our traditional and ecclesiastical views is so urgent and imperative as to justify every honorable attempt directed to this end. And if the sciences of historical and critical investigation are not yet complete, the general foundation and the entire direction of the movement have been determined long ago. And if these investigations into the origins of our religion disturb and disquiet some, they emancipate and reinstate others. The knowledge that these lectures were instrumental to such ends and the fact that a mere manuscript impression called forth a public attack, led to their publication. It is to be hoped that the intention of the author will be so far respected as to restrain any one from using them for purposes of propaganda, and that his judgment regarding them shall be accepted, namely, that if they succeed in getting the readers to properly relate themselves to the subjects under discussion and to acquaint themselves more thoroughly with them, their mission will have been fulfilled.

Göttingen, February, 1902.

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"In recent books on logic, distinction is made between two orders of inquiry concerning anything. First, what is the nature of it? How did it come about? What is its constitution, origin and history? And, second, what is its importance, meaning, or significance, now that it is once here? The answer to the one question is given in an *existential judgment* or proposition. The answer to the other is a *proposition of value*, what the Germans call a *werturtheil*, or what we may, if we like, denominate a *spiritual judgment*. What is called the higher criticism of the Bible is only a study of the Bible from this *existential* point of view, neglected too much by the earlier church."

PROF. WILLIAM JAMES, LL. D.

"But, as a rule, English work [in contrast to the German] of the last twenty years has been neutral or defensive. I fully believe that this period not only is coming, but has come to an end. There is evidence around us on many sides that a new spirit is abroad. When a German scholar sets himself a particular thesis, his first step is to get to know, as nearly as he can, all that has been written about it. In this way every step is based upon previous steps, and the continuity of research is never broken."

PROF. WILLIAM SANDAY, D. D. LL. D., Litt. D.

"He who studies the Bible, not as a partisan, but as a scholar, in the same spirit that the historian studies Greek and Roman literature, finds the Biblical books invaluable, for they are the precious documents of the religious evolution of mankind. Such men as Goethe, Humboldt and Huxley, the great pagans of modern times, had only words of praise for the Bible. They found in it an inexhaustible source of wisdom and poetry."

DR. PAUL CARUS.

THE HISTORICAL SOURCES FOR THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS.

I am to speak to you of the life and ministry of Jesus, according to the historical and scientific conception. The first question, then, is: Whence do we derive our knowledge of the person, of the ministry, and of the life of Jesus? What are the sources of the history?

Substantially the only sources are the Scriptures of the New Testament. The New Testament is not a single book; it is almost a small library of books and booklets, which were composed at different times, by different authors, and with very different contents and purposes. The Church gathered them in the course of its first centuries. It was convinced that in them it possessed products of its classical period, namely, the Apostolic age, and also trustworthy memoirs and authentic records of its origin. This collection was made not without great caution, and not without historical sense and

admirable tact. It chose from a great number of less worthy and uncertain materials those which, for ethical and religious reasons, stood the highest, and which had pre-eminently the greatest claim to genuineness, that is, Apostolic or primitive origin, and to authentic narration. But in spite of this, a more searching and historical investigation could not rest satisfied with this verdict; we must revise it more thoroughly, applying to it the most modern methods of research known to historical, religious, and linguistic criticism. Accordingly the New Testament as a whole, the Gospels and the Apostolic writings, have been subjected anew, book by book, to the severest and the most scrutinizing examination. This led to many changes in our judgment. Positions which had for centuries been regarded as certain and incontestable began to shift, became precarious, and proved to be untenable or uncertain. Innumerable questions were proposed and a chaos of answers follows. Everything was in a state of fermentation. Gradually, however, order and peace were again restored. Results of an assured character were brought to light, and a firm foundation was disclosed for further building. But amid all the storms of critical discussion, the four great epistles of Paul, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, and Romans, proved to be