

**CHRIST, CHRISTIANS AND  
CHRISTIANITY. BOOK  
I JESUS AN ESSENE**

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Christ, Christians and Christianity. Book I Jesus an Essene by E. Planta Nesbit

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BY

E. PLANTA NESBIT.

BOOK I.

JESUS AN ESSENE.

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"Search the Scriptures."—*John v. 39.*

"Prove all Things."—*1 Thez. v. 21.*

"There is no Religion higher than Truth."

*(The family motto of the Maharajahs of Benares.)*

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1895.

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*Divinity School.*

*Succeeding Books to be as follows :—*

- BOOK II.—JESUS IN SCRIPTURE.  
BOOK III.—THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE.  
BOOK IV.—BIBLICAL RESULTS.  
BOOK V.—ON RELIGIOUS DOUBTS.  
BOOK VI.—OUR RELIGIOUS TEACHERS.  
BOOK VII.—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

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## PREFACE.

CHRISTIANITY, its rise, progress and influence on the human race, must necessarily ever cause the deepest interest among thinking men. In the present day, in particular, reflecting persons in various parts of Christendom appear to be moved by one common spirit to examine the foundations of the faith in which they have been brought up. In doing this they are only accepting in a cordial and sincere spirit the invitation so often held out to them by the orthodox teachers of Christianity, who seem never tired of affirming that the more this religion is investigated the more it will shine, the more divine it will appear. But, notwithstanding the apparent confidence of these zealous advocates, it is a remarkable fact that really able and earnest religious inquiries have ever, as a rule, been looked upon with great suspicion and distrust by the accredited custodians of the faith, and in those instances in which investigation has been followed by a departure from the common creed itself, motives of the most unworthy character have been freely

and unscrupulously imputed to the seceders. It appears to be a foregone conclusion, with many persons, that no fair inquiry into religion is possible except by those who, at the commencement, in the progress, and at the termination of it, have been the professed friends of Christianity, as they themselves understand this religion. But *truth* is usually ignored by warm partisans, circumstances suggestive of doubt are sedulously avoided by them, facts admitting of an interpretation unfavourable to their own cherished views are silently suppressed, and a conclusion determined upon from the beginning is often triumphantly paraded as the necessary but expected result of a searching investigation, which, perhaps, is afterwards presented to the world in some work on the evidences of Christianity, declared, most probably, by its admirers to be unanswerable and incapable of refutation. Nothing can be a more legitimate and worthy pursuit for any man to undertake than a conscientious inquiry into the truth of the religion in which he has been reared, especially if he possesses the means and the ability to prosecute such an investigation, and a sufficient balance of mind to enable him to conduct it with fairness.

The great fact of the existence of a Deity rests on immutable grounds to the vast majority of mankind, as few exercising even a little reflection fail to perceive the



marks of a Divine intellect and of omnipotent power in the works of creation. But all mere dogmas rest on historical bases, and if we accept these in good faith, we ought surely to be thoroughly convinced that *the facts*, upon which it is affirmed they rest, really happened. If these never occurred, but are simply fabulous or mythical, how is it possible for the doctrines which spring from them to be worthy of credit here, or of vital consequence hereafter? For example, the doctrine of the incarnation rests upon the historical record which tells of the supernatural influence to which the mother of Jesus was subjected previous to his birth. It is, then, of the utmost importance to investigate the value of the narratives which relate to us the meagre particulars of the so-called miraculous nativity; for unless these are found, upon the closest scrutiny, to be worthy of *the highest and most implicit belief*, our reception of the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus must necessarily be shaken, if not destroyed. Again, the doctrine of the atonement rests upon the historical account of the resurrection of Jesus, or, more correctly speaking, of his ascension. It is therefore of the greatest consequence that we should be thoroughly, and on sufficient grounds, convinced not only that Jesus actually died and rose again, but that he was really taken *bodily* into heaven, as we are informed he

was in those documents which contain the story of his life and death. The evidence that these latter events occurred should be of the strongest description that it is possible to present to the human mind on historical subjects. The vital issues which are said to rest on the *truth* of the birth, crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, are such that no flaw whatever should be perceptible in the chain of evidence by which these events are connected together, even when subjected to the most rigorous and impartial scrutiny. If all these circumstances happened as recorded, every sincere inquirer who takes a reasonable amount of trouble to ascertain their reality, should certainly have conviction brought home at once to his mind. Is such undoubting assurance as we speak of always produced in the minds of sincere, ardent and able investigators of the life of Jesus? and if not, what is the cause of the irrepressible doubts and unbelief so many of them feel? All reasonable belief is based upon knowledge and credibility. There are many true events which are but partially believed because they rest on uncertain data. It may be laid down as an indisputable axiom that the obligation to believe anything is diminished in proportion as it is in itself discredited and rejected by our minds, owing to a want of evidence or innate improbability. A thing must

be true in itself to be really a fit subject for belief, and no amount of *faith* will make that to have happened which never took place. The unreasoning nature of real orthodox faith is a matter of constant rejoicing among certain classes of Christian believers. They tell us that their faith triumphs over all difficulties, of whatever kind, and that it "laughs at impossibilities." Such faith as this is strikingly illustrated by that which a child once showed in its mother's word. Speaking to a youthful companion concerning something its mother had told it, the former exclaimed, "It is so because my mother said so; and, if it was not, it would be, if she said it was." The child's faith was great, and its belief in its mother's veracity perfect; but it left out of its infantile calculations the possibility of her being mistaken; and neither its faith in her truthfulness nor in her testimony could possibly make that to be, which was not. And so in matters relating to Christianity. If certain assumed facts on which this religion is based really never occurred, all the faith in the world will not suffice to create them.

Surely, then, it is of the greatest importance to ascertain the absolute value of the historical records upon which doctrines of the highest significance are built and promulgated, for, if the former are weak, uncertain or untrue,