

ing the trunk of fact. So that, although Mark is one of the sources upon which the other two are dependent, and in many instances preserves an older and soberer, less ornamented type of tradition than they represent or have imported on their own account, yet the other and later ones contain some matter which may claim to be as much first-hand as the very best of Mark's, and vastly more so than a quite considerable part of his narrative.

But you will say if the case stands as has been described, and above all if it is true that every one of these Evangelists is steeped in Paul, how can we reasonably hope to get behind Paul to Jesus himself. Well, that is indeed the crux of the whole problem. We cannot do it without very energetic tunnelling through an uncommonly tough piece of rock. But I believe the task is after all not hopeless. Fortunately for us, Mark, the oldest Evangelist, is a very simple and honest man. His almost total lack of critical faculty cuts two ways. It helps us no less than hinders. He sets down many things quite ingenuously just as he got them, apparently without being at all aware that they are not very compatible with his own general view of the person and aims of Jesus. And besides, and this is after all the main thing, many, indeed most, of the recorded words of Jesus are so clear-cut, pithy, picturesque, stamped with such an unmistakably individual power and depth, or grace and sweetness, and therefore so nobly rhythmical and suffused with high emotion, that certainly any one who has ears to hear will never fail to catch in them the voice, at the very least, of one most singularly inspired and quite unique personality, uttering itself in a perfectly definite and incomparable historical situation, such as the resources of this earth do not produce more than once or twice in a thousand years. It is not impossible, I think, to reach solid ground at last—the very face and the very words of the Master, “A sober certainty of waking bliss.”

And I believe that thousands of simple souls all through the ages have done so just through the criticism of the child-