THE MODERN JEWISH VIEW OF JESUS

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Jewish scholars of the present day have produced a monument of historical study in the now well-known *Jewish Encyclopedia*, which aims to give a complete record of the Jewish people from the earliest times until the present. The work traverses the entire biblical period, including articles on all subjects related to the history, literature, and ideas of both Old and New Testaments. To many persons the most interesting topic in this *Jewish Encyclopedia* will be Christ and Christianity. The ancient Judaism cast off Jesus and his followers—a treatment which the succeeding generations of orthodox Jews have perpetuated until now. Do the modern Jewish scholars continue this attitude, or has a knowledge of first-century history and literature, together with a larger world-view, brought about in their minds a different conception of Jesus?

The articles in the *Encyclopedia* which deal directly with Christ and Christianity are written by representative Jewish scholars.2

2 Published by the Funk & Wagnalls Co., New York, 1901—, 12 volumes, quarto. Ten volumes have already appeared, carrying the work as far as "Samoscz." The editors are Cyrus Adler, Wilhelm Bacher, Gotthard Deutsch, Richard Gottheil, Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Jacobs, Kaufmann Kohler, Herman Rosenthal, Isidore Singer, Crawford H. Toy. In addition there is a board of consulting editors, and a large body of contributors.

The article "Jesus of Nazareth" (Vol. VII, pp. 160–73) is in three divisions, by three different authors: "Jesus in History," by Joseph Jacobs, of New York City, one of the editors, formerly president of the Jewish Historical Society of England, and author of a life of Jesus entitled *As Others Saw Him* (London, 1895); "Jesus in Theology," by Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, also one of the editors, president of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio; "Jesus in Jewish Legend," by Dr. Samuel Krauss, professor in the Normal College at Budapest, Hungary, and author of "Das Leben Jesu" nach Jüdischen Quellen (1902). The article "New Testament" (Vol. IX, pp. 246–54) deals with all of the New Testament books in a single brief treatment (the Old Testament books each receive a separate extended article); the author is Dr. Kohler. The article "Christianity in its Relation to Judaism" (Vol. IV, pp. 49–59) is also by Dr. Kohler. No doubt the article on "Saul of Tarsus," which is yet to appear, will likewise be of importance.
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They are representative, however, not of orthodox or traditional Judaism, but of reformed or progressive Judaism. Reformed Judaism is the product of modern thought, investigation, and adaptation to existing conditions. The movement began in Germany a hundred years ago. Previous to that time the Jews lived in almost complete intellectual isolation; but with the opening of the nineteenth century they began to mingle with gentiles, to enter upon historical and scientific studies, and to think in modern ways. There resulted many essential modifications of Jewish ideas and practices: the biblical and talmudic ritual is no longer regarded as literally binding; the right of the Jews to adapt themselves to modern life is recognized; the Old Testament is interpreted according to present historical methods; the New Testament is no longer upon the *index expurgatorius*; reasonable discrimination is made between the essentials and the nonessentials of Judaism; the belief in a coming Messiah is discarded; the restoration of the national life in Palestine (Zionism) is not sought, nor the reinstitution of the ancient temple with its sacrificial, priestly cult; the traditional dietary laws are not rigorously observed; and changes have been made in religious worship, such as services on Sunday supplementary to those of the sabbath, and the conduct of sabbath schools.

The chief training school for rabbis of Reformed Judaism is the Hebrew Union College at Cincinnati, Ohio, which was founded in 1875 by Isaac M. Wise, the father of Reformed Judaism in America, and was directed by him until his death in 1900. Three years later Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, rabbi of Temple Beth-El, New York City, was appointed successor to Dr. Wise as president of Hebrew Union College, and continues in that office at the present time. The aim of Reformed Judaism is “to promote assimilation with modern conditions without sacrificing the integrity of Judaism.”

3 Dr. Wise was born in Bohemia in 1819, was educated at Prague and Vienna, and came to New York in 1846. From that time until his death he was the best known and most influential of American Jews.

4 Dr. Kohler was born in Bavaria in 1843, was educated at Munich, Berlin, and Leipzig, and came to America as rabbi in 1869. The leading Jews of the past generation in the United States were nearly all of foreign birth and training.

5 So says Dr. Joseph Silverman, in his valuable article “Judaism, Reformed,” in the *Encyclopedia Americana* (1904). Dr. Silverman is rabbi of Temple Emanu-El,
now effectively promoted by several organizations, the chief one being the Central Conference of American Rabbis, founded in 1889 by Dr. Wise, and of which Dr. Joseph Stolz, of Chicago, is now president. At a Reformed Rabbinical Conference held in Pittsburgh in 1885 a platform of Reformed Judaism was adopted, which is now generally accepted as indicative of the purpose of this movement among the Jews.⁶

The Jewish Encyclopedia is an elaborate expression of Reformed Judaism in America; although its utterances are unofficial (since this body of Jews has no ecclesiastical organization to furnish official statements of its views), it is nevertheless thoroughly representative and outspoken. Hence the interest that attaches to its statements about Christian facts and beliefs. The modern Jewish scholars who have written for the Encyclopedia the articles "Jesus," "New Testa-

New York City which for more than fifty years has been the leading Reformed Jewish congregation in America, and is now the largest and wealthiest Jewish congregation in the world.

⁶ The platform reads: "(1) Judaism conveys the highest conception of God and of his relation to Man. God is the Creator and Ruler of the world, Father and Educator of the human race. (2) The Holy Scriptures are the record of Divine Revelation and of the consecration of the Jewish people as the missionaries of the one God. In composition and literary arrangement the Scriptures are only the work of men with the unavoidable limitations of their age. (3) The results of natural science are the best helps to the understanding of the working of Divine Love in the world, the Bible serving as guide to illustrate the working of Divine Power within us. (4) The Mosaic laws are intended for the training of the Jews of Palestine in their former surroundings; only the moral laws are divine; all social, political, and priestly statutes, inconsistent with our modern habits and views, are to be rejected. (5) The Mosaic-rabbinical laws on diet, purity, and dress fail to imbue modern Jews with the spirit of priestly holiness; their observance today would obstruct rather than enhance moral and spiritual elevation. (6) Israel's messianic hope relates to the establishment of the authority of peace, truth, justice, and love among men. No return to Palestine is expected, nor the reinstitution there of a Jewish state, or of a worship conducted by the descendants of Aaron. (7) Judaism is an ever-growing, progressive, and rational religion of modern civilization, and asserts the necessity of preserving identity with the great past of the Jewish nation. (8) Judaism hails the efforts made by various religious denominations toward removing the barriers separating sect from sect. (9) It is the duty of Jews to spread the knowledge of their religious truths and mission among Jews and non-Jews. (10) The present agitated state of Judaism is a period of transition from a blind belief in authority and exclusion to a rational and humanitarian conception of religion; the masses, therefore, should be enlightened as to the history and mission of the Jewish people, and their social and spiritual condition elevated through press, pulpit, and school."
ment,” and “Christianity” seem to have reached mature thought and a general agreement in their position, and their words may be taken as voicing the forward movement among the Jews. There can be no question of their sincere desire to discover the real place and service of Jesus in the development of Judaism. They have studied the New Testament; they have acquainted themselves with the ideas of the Christians regarding Christ and Christianity; they have used the theological books of modern Christian scholars. An honest, candid effort has been made to judge Christianity fairly and to appraise it correctly. To what degree this effort has been successful may in part be gathered from the *Encyclopedia* articles now under consideration. It certainly cannot be easy for Jews today to escape the prejudices against non-Jews, and especially against Christ and Christianity, which have descended to them as an inheritance from many generations—any more than it is easy for Christians to escape the prejudice against Jews, and especially the Jews of Jesus’ day, which the Christian church from its first days has handed down to them.

Further, it is natural for Jews to look upon the New Testament writings as partisan documents directed against them—and none too scrupulous of fact, just as it is natural for the Christian to accept the New Testament characterization of the Jews as in every respect fully informed, impartial, and beyond question. Let it be said that Jew and Christian alike have inveterate prejudices to overcome, and much historical fact to learn, before they will be able to agree regarding Jesus and Christianity. That time has not come yet. But the *Jewish Encyclopedia* shows that modern Jewish scholars have entered upon a world-view, and are pursuing those historical investigations which can lead to a true understanding of the facts over which controversy has raged, because of which Jew and Christian have been bitter enemies.

I proceed to sketch the view of Jesus presented in the *Encyclopedia*. It cannot be expected that this view will be acceptable to Christians, although it is much more favorable to Jesus than the traditional Jewish view has been. Nor is it at all likely that the Reformed Jewish view will prove final for the modern Jewish scholars themselves; they have begun to reconstruct their conception of
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Christ and Christianity, but they have not finished. In some matters the Encyclopedia view will be found to agree with the most radical positions of present-day Christian scholars, like Pfleiderer, Schmiedel, and O. Holtzmann. Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, president of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, is chief spokesman in the articles "New Testament" and "Jesus of Nazareth," supported in the latter by Joseph Jacobs, of New York City. Extracts from these articles, to verify the sketch now to be given, will appear in the footnotes.

1. The four New Testament gospels belong to the close of the first and to the second centuries. The material contained in them rests upon certain historical facts, but the earliest forms of the narrative of Jesus have been so misunderstood, modified, and elaborated during fifty or more years of transmission and translation that it is not now possible to recover the simple, exact facts concerning his life. These changes in the narrative were due in part to the natural errors and limitations of those who handed it down, but were still more due to the theological ideas of Jesus' followers, who early developed speculative doctrines of his person and his work. In addition, the gentle Christians showed themselves intolerant of the Jews, drew distorted descriptions of their religious and moral characteristics, and misrepresented their attitude toward Jesus. The gospels were a portion of the literature of this controversy, written to maintain and propagate this advanced Christian position; they were worked-over partisan documents, in a measure untrue to the actual history of Jesus and unfair to the Jews. The exact facts which the gospels purport to narrate can be learned only by a difficult process of analysis whereby the later and less valuable of their contents will be distinguished from those which are primitive and trustworthy.7

7 "Because the gospels, while containing valuable material, are all written in a polemical spirit and for the purpose of substantiating the claim of the messianic and superhuman character of Jesus, it is difficult to present an impartial story of his life. Nor is the composite picture of Jesus drawn from the synoptic gospels, such as is presented by modern Christian writers . . . an approximation to the real Jesus." (Kohler, Vol. VII, p. 166.) "A careful analysis corroborates the conclusion, assumed to be axiomatic by Jewish scholars, that the older and more genuine the records, written or unwritten, of the doings and teachings of Jesus, the more they betray close kinship with and friendly relations to Jews and Judaism; but that the more remote they are from the time and scene of the activity of Jesus, the more they show of hostility to the Jewish people and of antagonism to the Mosaic law. The changing attitude and
2. The discredited portions of the gospel narrative are many and various, such as the infancy stories, the baptism, the temptation, the transfiguration, and the resurrection; the miracles, except some wonderful cures; the alleged fulfilments of messianic prophecies; the accounts which describe the Pharisees as hostile to Jesus, and make the Sanhedrin responsible for his death; Jesus’ voluntary acceptance and predictions of his crucifixion; the sayings attributed to him which abrogate or criticise the moral, ritual, or ceremonial law of Judaism; the sayings which look toward a universal message and mission; most of the eschatological utterances; and all those sayings in which Jesus seems to claim superhuman qualities or prerogatives. What remains creditable in the gospel narratives after this analysis has been completed does not furnish a distinct picture of the real Jesus. Nevertheless, he was an historical personage, an ardent Jew of prophetic spirit and insight, who performed a religious work of lasting influence upon humanity.

3. Jesus was born about 2 B.C. The place of his birth was Nazareth (not Bethlehem, as alleged by the Christians to establish a fulfilment of the messianic prophecy in Mic. 5:2). The duration of his public ministry was ten months. He was executed at Jerusalem in the Passover season of 29 A.D.9

4. He was an “ecstatic,” swayed by great religious emotions, possessed of extraordinary religious ideas, subject to visions and celestial experiences. He exercised a remarkable power of healing, devoting himself particularly to “casting out demons,” i.e., according to the modern understanding of the maladies, curing nervous and mental diseases.10 He was an Essene, sharing many of the ideas and practices of that sect; but in some respects he followed his own method in distinction from that of the Essenes or of any other class.11

The temper of the new sect influenced the records at every stage, and this accounts for the conflicting statements found beside each other in the various gospels and gospel stories. . . . As a matter of fact, the discrepancies in the records extend over all parts of the four gospels and invalidate the claim of historicity advanced for Mark or for any other of the gospels.” (Kohler, Vol. IX, pp. 247 ff.)

8 See especially Kohler, Vol. IX, pp. 248-50, and Jacobs, Vol. VII, pp. 161-64. Some of the more significant statements are quoted in the following footnotes.


In his public work he was kind toward friends, but evasive, harsh, and unjust toward others. He was a man of the masses, condemning the rich and those in official positions.12

5. In his attitude toward the Law, Jesus was a faithful Jew. He considered that it was his duty to obey the Mosaic statutes in their current interpretation. When he said that he came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them (Matt. 5:17), he meant a literal and complete performance of all their commands; and he continued, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19). To be sure, Jesus—like the common people among whom he lived and worked—gave less heed to the minutiae of the pharisaic restrictions concerning ceremonial cleanness, fasting, and sabbath observance, but none the less he counted himself a true Jew. Also, he felt called to rebuke disobedience of the Law, saying, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20); “Ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith; but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone” (Matt. 23:23). But other Jewish prophets of righteousness had also summoned the people to a fuller and higher observance of the Law. Jesus said, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe” (Matt. 23:2 f.); he enjoined the leper whom he healed to go to the priest and perform the prescribed ritual (Mark 1:40-45); he affirmed, “I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). The gospels indeed contain passages which represent Jesus as criticising the law (Matt. 5:20-48), as refusing it obedience in some respects (Mark 2:18, 23-28; 7:1-23), and as proclaiming a universal gospel (Mark 2:18-22; 13:10; Matt. 8:11 f.; 21:43); but these passages are thought to be mistaken as to the facts.

12 “In almost all of his public utterances he was harsh, severe, and distinctly unjust in his attitude toward the ruling and well-to-do classes. . . . He rarely replied directly to any important question of principle, but evaded queries by counter-queries. . . . He had from the beginning laid stress upon the difficulty of associating sanctity with riches; and in this he adopted the quasi-socialistic views of the later Psalms.” (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 164.)
indicative rather of the developed Christian conceptions of a later period.\textsuperscript{13}

6. All originality in the content and point of view of his teaching is denied to Jesus. In even the highest and most distinctive portions he was but voicing the thoughts previously present in Jewish minds, to which expression had been abundantly given by other teachers. In his proclamation that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and in his injunction that men should repent of their sins (Mark 1:14, 15), Jesus was simply continuing the properly Jewish preaching of John the Baptist. In his great doctrine of the fatherhood of God, which he made central in his teaching, he was but reiterating a truth of which the Jews were already in full possession. Even the Prayer which he gave to his disciples as an epitome of Christian aspiration was made up entirely of ideas and phrases drawn from the current Jewish

\textsuperscript{13} "The Sermon on the Mount, if this was ever delivered by him, was never intended to supplant the Law of Moses, though the compiler of the gospel of Matthew seeks to create that impression. Nor does any of the apostles or of the epistles refer to the new code promulgated by Jesus. . . . Only, in order to be prepared for the kingdom of God, which he expected to come in the immediate future and during the lifetime of his hearers, . . . Jesus laid down especial rules of conduct for his disciples, demanding of them a higher righteousness and purity and a greater mutual love than the Pharisees practiced." (Kohler, Vol. VII, p. 169.)

"While claiming not to infringe or curtail the Law, Jesus directed his followers to pay more attention to the intention and motive with which pious deeds should be performed. . . . Jesus contended that the application of this principle was practically equivalent to a revolution in spiritual life; and he laid stress upon the contrast between the old Law and the new one, especially in his Sermon on the Mount. In making these pretensions he was following a tendency which at the period of his career was especially marked in the Hasidæans and Essenes, though they associated it with views as to external purity and seclusion from the world which differentiated them from Jesus. He does not appear, however, to have contended that the new spirit would involve any particular change in the application of the Law. . . . It is exaggerated to regard these [Jesus'] variations from current practices as exceptionally abnormal at the beginning of the first century. The existence of a whole class of \textit{Am ha-Arez}, whom Jesus may be taken to represent, shows that the rigor of the Law had not yet spread throughout the people. . . . Nothing in all this insistence upon the spirit of the Law rather than upon the halackic development of it was necessarily or essentially anti-Jewish." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 163.)

"Irreconcilable differences are found in the sayings attributed to Jesus concerning the Jews and the Law. According to the older version (Matt. 5:17–19), he declared that he had not come to destroy, but to fulfil—that is, to practice—the Law. . . . On the other hand, he is declared to be the hope of the gentiles. . . . and he becomes the exponent of the Pauline ideas that the old must give way to the new." (Kohler, Vol. IX, p. 248.)
liturgy. In other words, Jesus was but an exponent of the Jewish religious ideas of his time; he added nothing by way either of substance or of proportion; he did not transcend the limits of first-century Judaism.\textsuperscript{14}

7. The success of Jesus, so far as he succeeded, was due to the spectacular features of his ministry. His teaching would not alone have brought him a following, nor his personality. It was as a wonder worker, particularly as a healer of the sick, that he won attention.\textsuperscript{15} The common people welcomed him because of his miracles, and he was able to help them through the power over them thus secured. Jesus' case was similar to that of Simon Magus, in the city of Samaria, who "used sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorcery" (Acts 8:9-11).

8. Jesus did not claim to be divine, either in person or in prerogative. The gospel passages, found chiefly in the fourth gospel, which

\textsuperscript{14} "In essentials Jesus' teaching was that of John the Baptist, and it laid emphasis on two points: (1) repentance, and (2) the near approach of the kingdom of God. One other point is noted by Christian theologians as part of his essential teaching, namely, insistence upon the fatherhood of God. This is such a commonplace in the Jewish liturgy and in Jewish thought that it is scarcely necessary to point out its essentially Jewish character. As regards repentance, its specifically Jewish note has been recently emphasized by C. G. Montefiore . . . who points out that Christianity lays less stress upon this side of religious life than Judaism; so that in this direction Jesus was certainly more Jewish than Christian. As regards the notion of the 'kingdom of heaven,' the title itself is specifically Jewish; and the content of the concept is equally so. . . . In many ways his [Jesus'] attitude was specifically Jewish, even in directions which are usually regarded as signs of Judaic narrowness. Jesus appears to have preached regularly in the synagogue, which would not have been possible if his doctrines had been recognized as being essentially different from the current pharisaic beliefs. . . . His special prayer [the Lord's Prayer] is merely a shortened form of the third, fifth, sixth, ninth, and fifteenth of the Eighteen Benedictions [of the Jewish liturgy]." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 162.) "Many of the sayings attributed to Jesus have been literally taken over from the Didache; others were pharisaic teachings well known in the rabbinical schools." (Kohler, Vol. IX, p. 249.)

\textsuperscript{15} "It was not as the teacher of new religious principles nor as a new lawgiver, but as a new wonder-worker, that Jesus won fame and influence among the simple inhabitants of Galilee in his lifetime; and it was due only to his frequent apparitions after his death to these Galilean followers that the belief in his resurrection and in his messianic and divine character was accepted and spread." (Kohler, Vol. VII, p. 167.)
bear that significance, give utterance, not to Jesus' own idea of himself, but to the later ideas of the disciples concerning him. His cry of despair on the cross disproves such assumptions. He, on the contrary, regarded himself as human, but as typically human, with an important mission to men. He was indeed able to help the lower classes. And it was not strange that those who loved him expressed their appreciation of him in terms of divinity and messiahship. Jesus was not the much prophesied Jewish Messiah, nor did he himself publicly claim this; opinion seems uncertain as to whether he privately considered himself Messiah, and if so, what idea of messiahship he considered applicable to himself.  

9. No new religious movement or organization was constructed by Jesus, nor did he intend any such to result from his work. Since he considered himself a true Jew, and his mission to be to Judaism, his purpose was to upbuild truth and righteousness within the confines of existing Jewish institutions. He did not teach his followers to withdraw from the synagogue services, nor to forsake the temple worship. The growth after his death of the Christian movement and organization, on lines independent of and hostile to Judaism, could not have been anticipated or desired by him.  

10. Jesus' deliberate and self-sacrificing choice of death as the consummation of his ministry, together with the three specific predictions of his crucifixion to his disciples, as described in the gospels, are regarded as a later misconception of the facts. Instead, it is understood that Jesus' violent death came to him as a surprise—that he did not go to Jerusalem with this expectation, nor did he then willingly allow himself to be captured and executed. The New

16 "Jesus regarded himself as typically human, and claimed authority and regard in that aspect." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 164.) "[Jesus' word on the cross], 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' was in all its implications itself a disproof of the exaggerated claims made for him after his death by his disciples. The very form of his punishment would disprove those claims in Jewish eyes. No Messiah that Jews could recognize could suffer such a death. . . . How far in his own mind Jesus substituted another conception of the Messiah, and how far he regarded himself as fulfilling that ideal, still remain among the most obscure of historical problems." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 166.)

17 The whole tendency of his work was against the very idea of organization. . . . He was content to let the influence of his own character work upon the persons immediately surrounding him, and that they should transmit this influence silently and without organization." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 164.)
Testament accounts arose post factum, out of a desire to explain how this death could have come to one who had been sent by God as Messiah and of whom omniscience was predicated.  

II. The responsibility for Jesus' death was confined to a small number of priests. The Jewish nation was not responsible, neither were the common people, for they favored him to the end. Not even the Pharisees were responsible, in spite of the New Testament representation that they were Jesus' chief enemies and the instigators of his death. The priests who had charge of the temple, and who were in political control under the Romans, became incensed at Jesus, and secured his death by alleging that he was inimical to the Roman domination over Palestine. Properly speaking, there was no trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was not called together, no formal hearing was given Jesus; instead, the coterie of priests caused his secret arrest, passed sentence upon him, and persuaded the procurator Pilate to execute him as a political insurrectionist. On this view the condemnation of the world for Jesus' death must rest only upon a few guilty individuals, not upon the great judiciary body of the Jews, not upon the religious leaders of the day, not upon the Jewish people as a whole.

19 The older version [of the crucifixion story] knows only that the chief priests and scribes constituting the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death and handed him over to the Romans, who mocked, scourged, and killed him. . . . With the older version tallies the story according to which the cause of his condemnation by the Sanhedrin was Jesus' hostility to the temple. . . . It was at a later time, and in contradiction to facts showing their friendly attitude (Luke 13:31), that the Pharisees were represented as having conspired against the life of Jesus." (Kohler, Vol. IX, p. 247.)
20 "His [Jesus'] indignation at seeing the temple hill turned into a poultry and cattle market for the benefit of the arrogant hierarchy (Mark 11:15-18) fired him into action against these bazaars." (Kohler, Vol. VII, p. 160.) "They had been offended in both pride and pocket by Jesus' action in clearing the purlieus of the temple." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 165.)
21 "There could be no question of anything corresponding to a trial taking place on this occasion before the Sanhedrin. . . . It is more probable that the twenty-three members of the priestly section of the Sanhedrin, who had most reason to be offended with Jesus' action in cleansing the temple, met informally after he had been seized, and elicited sufficient to justify them, in their own opinion, in delivering him over to the Romans as likely to cause trouble by his claims or pretensions to the messiahship, which of course would be regarded by them as rebellion against Rome. Nothing corresponding to a Jewish trial took place." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 166.)
12. The results of Jesus' life were small so far as the Jewish nation and Judaism were concerned. He had no real influence upon the thought of his people, or upon their institutions, for these continued without change. He left no permanent impress upon their literature, for Josephus and the Talmud scarcely mention him. Some individual Jews adhered to him as disciples, and gave up their Judaism to become Christians. But the work that he did, strange as it would have seemed to Jesus himself, led to a great religious movement and organization, not among the Jews, but among the gentiles. Of this gentile movement and organization, known as Christianity, Paul was the founder and leader—yet not in his own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ, whom he regarded as the long-expected Jewish Messiah and the Son of God with divine person and prerogatives. The mission of Jesus was that of a prophet of religious truth, a preacher of righteousness, to the common people of his nation. This mission he performed.

The chief purpose of this paper has been to set before Christian thinkers for their consideration this modern Jewish view of Jesus. It was but recently urged in all seriousness, by the chief Jewish scholar of Great Britain, that Christian scholars are wholly neglectful of the new and transforming light which modern Jewish scholarship has thrown upon the history of Judaism in Jesus' day. Certainly, every

22 "His life, though indirectly of so critical a character, had very little direct influence on the course of Jewish history or thought. In contemporary Jewish literature his career is referred to only in the (interpolated) passage of Josephus' Antiquities, XVIII, iii, 3, while the references in the Talmud are for the most part as legendary as those in the apocryphal gospels, though in an opposite direction." (Jacobs, Vol. VII, p. 160.)

23 See Kohler, Vol. IV, pp. 52 f.; and the article "Saul of Tarsus" in the forthcoming eleventh volume of the Jewish Encyclopedia.

24 "However, a great historic movement of the character and importance of Christianity cannot have arisen without a great personality to call it into existence, and to give it shape and direction. Jesus of Nazareth had a mission from God . . . and he must have had the spiritual power and fitness to be chosen for it." (Kohler, Vol. VII, p. 167.) "He felt the calling to preach the gospel to the poor . . . and truly because the redeemer of the lower classes, who were not slow to lift him to the station of Messiah." (Kohler, Vol. IV, p. 50.)

student of historical facts, and every seeker for religious truth, is in conscience bound to recognize and to use all that is known. If Mr. Montefiore's statement is correct, his judgment is just. It is in the interest of his plea for the recognition of Jewish scholarship that the modern Jewish view of Jesus is here brought forward for discussion, and the question raised as to what revisions have been made necessary thereby in the Christian interpretation of the gospels? Without entering fully upon a debate of this question, a few general comments on the Jewish view may perhaps be permitted:

1. The gospels contained in the New Testament are, and must be used as, the most original existing sources of information concerning Jesus and first-century Judaism. The study of them must precede, not follow, the formation of a judgment regarding the main features of the history concerned. This obligation rests upon all scholars alike, both Jews and Christians. The gospels are serious and bona fide documents of the first century purporting to tell the story of Jesus' life, and they are the only such documents extant. They do not claim for themselves, nor need anyone claim for them, that they narrate this story from beginning to end with absolute accuracy. But if it is to be held that the gospels are in fundamental error regarding the most important matters of the history, the burden of proof must rest with those who make the charge; and all the more is this true if the error has arisen, not from mere lack of accurate information, but as the result of a reconstruction of the gospel story to fit the developed ideas of the Christians at a secondary stage. The allegations that the followers of Jesus soon made over the gospel into something which originally it was not, and that the gospels, just because they were written by these Christians, cannot be trusted to tell the story of Jesus as it really was, must be well substantiated by evidence before they will find acceptance.

Christian scholars must free themselves of fundamental historical or theological assumptions in approaching the study of the gospels, though it is honest to confess they have seldom, if ever, done so. Similarly, Jewish scholars must free themselves of fundamental historical or theological assumptions in approaching the study of the gospels, and the question arises how far have they succeeded in doing so. Do we find some such assumptions in the Jewish conceptions
that no good Jew, as they hold Jesus to have been, could have dreamed of treating the Law as anything but permanent in authority, or of creating a religious movement and organization to rival Judaism; that the Pharisees could not have been the superficial and hypocritical religious leaders which the New Testament describes them to have been; that neither the Jewish nation nor the Sanhedrin could have wished to put Jesus to death; that Jesus was not God's response to the messianic hopes and predictions of his people; and that regarding Jesus no predication of divine personality can be justified?

2. The view that Jesus practiced and preached a full literal obedience to the Jewish law, as taught in his day by the scribes, cannot be derived from the gospels, and cannot be held except by a denial of their abundant and—one would have supposed—indisputable testimony. In Matt. 5:21-48, in Mark 7:1-23, and in many similar passages, Jesus assumes a position of superiority to the Law; he passes judgment upon its statutes; he points out its defects and shortcomings; he counts himself free and frees others from a full literal obedience to its commands. He lives, and he teaches men to live, in accordance with great religious and moral principles. These principles underlay, and in a good measure were embodied in, the codifications of the Jewish Law; but in his thought men should not be slaves to a legal system, however good—they should rather be free persons doing the will of God out of deliberate choice and with intelligent judgment, guided by mind and conscience instead of by a legal code. He did not re-enact the Ten Commandments, or give statutory injunctions of any kind. This freedom from the Jewish Law, of which Paul also made much, was one of the essential features of Jesus' gospel.

The position of the modern Jewish scholars seems peculiar. They have themselves arrived at just this freedom from their ancestral Law which Christians suppose Jesus taught. As may be seen above in the platform of Reformed Judaism, they do not regard the statutes of the Law as binding upon themselves further than they approve for their own lives. They, too, assume a position of superiority to their Law, judging what parts of it they should observe and what parts they need not observe. This is obviously the only right way to treat the legal code of Judaism. But is the discovery of this
method to be denied to Jesus and credited to Reformed Jews of the
nineteenth century? No, the discovery could not be credited to
them, for they admit Paul taught and practiced this freedom from
the Law. Who was the discoverer of the method, then—was it Paul
or Jesus? Why not Jesus, as the gospels have always been under-
stood by Christians clearly to affirm?

3. It is much to be thankful for that a circle of modern Jews has
come to think well of Jesus. Formerly, Jews execrated him as a
false Messiah, a traitor to the law and the religion of his people, a
deluded enthusiast who imagined himself divine; this opinion they
received from Jesus' contemporaries who, because they had this
opinion of him, persecuted him and put him to death. It is a change
for the better that some Jews can now think of Jesus as a good Jew,
particularly in the sense that he was the friend rather than the enemy
of Judaism, even if they so far overstate the truth as to affirm that it
was not he but Paul who taught the Christians that his gospel was a
universal spiritual religion, and that the legalism, ritualism, cere-
monialism, and nationalism of the Jewish faith and cult would be
outgrown. We, as modern disciples of Jesus, warmly welcome the
recognition and appreciation which Reformed Jews are giving him,
believing this to be an indication that the worst is past in the aliena-
tion of the Jews from Christianity, and that Jesus' true greatness of
person, character, work, and teaching will become increasingly
apparent.

But the delimitation of Jesus within the confines of first-century
Judaism is impossible. We know what first-century Judaism was,
not only from the New Testament (the epistles as well as the gospels),
but also from Josephus and from the Talmud; Jesus did not corre-
respond to these characteristics, these boundaries, this point of view.
The New Testament cannot be made to yield such a picture of him
by any legitimate process of criticism or interpretation. To maintain
that Jesus and the Pharisees were friends; that he worked in harmony
with them, according to the Reformed Jewish view; that the whole
story of the conflict between them was a fiction of the Christians to
justify certain later conceptions of Jesus which they reached, is to
attribute to the gospels and epistles of the New Testament a falsity
in their story which needs more proof than the hypothesis has yet
received.
Modern Jews consider themselves the lineal and spiritual descendants and heirs of the Pharisees of the first century; so no doubt they are. Further, they are jealous for the good reputation of these ancestors; and that is right. Then, since these present-day Jews cannot conceive of themselves as rejecting and persecuting Jesus in the way the New Testament describes the Pharisees to have done, they cannot believe the New Testament description true; and that is natural. The position does credit to the religious and moral sense of the modern Reformed Jews; they are indeed reformed. The fallacy lies in the attribution of their own high religious and moral judgments to the first-century Pharisees, when the weight of evidence easily shows the general correctness of the New Testament characterization. It is hopeless to attempt to prove that the gospels and epistles in this particular totally misrepresent the facts.

4. It seems difficult also to assent to the view that Jesus lacked originality. We are told that all his teachings had already been thought out and inculcated by Jewish teachers before him, that even his most distinctive doctrines—the fatherhood of God, the blessing and duty of forgiveness, the inner character of righteousness—were already current among the people, so that his task was simply that of reiteration. It is, of course, true that an interrelation existed between the content and form of Jesus’ teaching and the content and form of Judaism in his day, a fact which Christian scholars, sometimes through ignorance and sometimes through prejudice, have often failed to recognize. But I believe it is not true that Jesus merely voiced the best Jewish thought of his time, in forms of expression already familiar to his hearers.26 One may find parallels in Jewish literature preceding and contemporary with Jesus for not a few of his sayings, among them certain phrases of the Lord’s Prayer; but

26 Particularly interesting at this point is Mr. Montefiore’s latest article, “The Synoptic Gospels and the Jewish Consciousness” (Hibbert Journal, July, 1905, pp. 649-67). Among other things, he says: “The Gospels do contain teaching which, when compared with ordinary and average Judaism, is both valuable and original, new and true. . . . It seems accurate to say that the bringing together of so many excellent ethical and religious doctrines within the compass of a single volume constitutes an originality by itself. The originality is all the greater if these doctrines are united together and illuminated by a few predominant principles, and put into the mouth, as well as exemplified by the life, of a single illustrious Teacher. . . . It seems to me that what we may call the genius, the first-classness of the Synoptics, also
how comes it that the Jews did not at first show, and through nineteen
centuries never have shown, any real appreciation of the Lord’s
Prayer, or of Jesus’ other teachings, which nevertheless they claim
were reiterations of their own best thoughts?
Jesus did not cast aside the Old Testament as false, and worthless
for his gospel; instead, he found in it many true conceptions of God,
man, and duty, expressed in terms and phrases which could not be
improved. His teaching takes up much that was best in the prophetic
teaching. But he acted as judge of what was best, using only such
ideas and expressions as would convey his own message most effect-
ively. The criterion of truth and goodness was not the Old Testa-
ment, but his own perception of what was true and good.
His originality consisted first of all in his ability to know within
himself what were the highest conceptions of reality and obligation.
If he found these ideas of religion and morality in the Old Testament,
or in the minds of his hearers, he could confirm them; when he did
not find them elsewhere, he could furnish them from the direct source
of knowledge within him. In fact, he did both things; some current
ideas of truth and goodness he corroborated, others he gave to men
for the first time. Most often he selected from the Old Testament
and Jewish teachings those which in a measure expressed the spiritual
realities and obligations, showing some genuine perception of the
character and will of God; then he broadened and purified these
teachings till they contained and conveyed the full revelation of truth
and goodness which it was his mission to give to men. His originality
consisted, secondly, in his matchless methods as a teacher; in his
ability to interest, instruct, and impress his hearers; in his perfect
use of language to clothe his thought; in the power and attractiveness
constitutes a portion of their newness and originality. For a thought is not merely
great and new by its substance, but also by its form. Not merely what is said, but
how it is said, gives to a particular teaching its vast stimulus for good, its illumination
and haunting power. . . . Here we have religion and morality joined together at a
white heat of intensity. The teaching often glows with light and fire. . . . Con-
nected with this fervor and passion comes the impression of originality made by the
great paradoxes of the Gospels, which are mainly contained in the Sermon on the
Mount. . . . Lowly, active service for the benefit of the humblest is an essential
feature of the Synoptic religion. . . . Here once more, we seem to be cognizant of
fresh and original teaching, which has produced fruit to be ever reckoned among
the distinctive glories of Christianity.”
of his personality; in the interpretation of his teaching by his deeds. He is the greatest teacher of history; he has had no equal. This is not yet the verdict of the Jewish nation, but it is the established verdict of the Christian world.

If there is such a thing as originality, Jesus was original. He does not lack originality who discovers for himself, and reveals to others, the reality and meaning of religious truth, the nature and duty of goodness, the significance and opportunity of human life. To enlarge faith, virtue, and knowledge, to give them clearer embodiment and expression, to increase their attractiveness and power, making them regnant in men—this kind of originality also characterized the work of Jesus. Why should he not make use of current ideas, terms, and phrases, if they could serve his purpose? Shall we say that the designer and builder of a great cathedral lacks originality because he does not himself quarry and shape the stones for the structure?

5. Jesus was not merely a Jew, nor the gospel merely a revived Judaism. The fact that both Jesus and the gospel have been rejected and repudiated by the Jews from the first century to the twentieth is sufficient proof. After due acknowledgment has been made of the genetic relation of the younger to the older religion, and of the great indebtedness of Christianity to Judaism for much of its thought, atmosphere, terminology and literature, the fact remains that the daughter-religion is a new individual, with a character and a life of her own, and with a power to enlighten and uplift men which the parent-religion did not have. Until the nineteenth century, Judaism remained the almost stationary, exclusive religion of a single people—a people whose existence is only as scattered individuals among the nations of the earth. Judaism has not shown a capacity to meet the religious and moral needs of other peoples, or (as the Reform movement indicates) even of its own people. Meanwhile the gospel of Jesus, under many forms and adaptations, has been the religion of developing civilization from the first century to the present; and it now shows the vitality, adaptiveness, and usefulness which give promise that in time it will become, as Jesus conceived and intended it should be, the religion of the world, furnishing the recognized ethical ideal and imperative for mankind.
If this should prove true, that time when it comes will find Jews and Christians at one with each other. The world knows that the Hebrew people surpassed all other ancient peoples in spiritual purpose and insight, in moral intention and perception, in the actual attainment of religious faith and holy living. The world also knows that Judaism has not lost this essential race characteristic, but in a measure achieves, and is capable of again fully achieving, the historical greatness of the race in these highest aspects of life. But this greatness cannot be reached by a mere perpetuation of the ancient religion, conducted in isolation from the currents of modern life, and without adaptation to present religious and moral conditions and ideals. May it not be that modern Jews, when they have grasped the large world-view, have adjusted themselves to modern ways of thinking, have completed their historical and scientific investigations, and have possessed themselves of those treasures of faith which non-Jewish peoples have contributed to religion, may come to find in Jesus and his gospel that which the ancient Jews failed to find—a satisfying expression of their highest beliefs and aspirations, and a commanding ideal? “He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.” He was indeed a Jewish Christ, and it is not too much to expect that Jews will come to know him as he is, and to receive him with the deferred ardor of centuries. The present Reformed Judaism, in its view of Jesus and otherwise, is not final—it is one of the several stages through which Judaism is destined to pass on its way to a full recognition that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” With Paul we may say: “If the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”