

HITLER'S DIARIES AND JESUS' GOSPELS:

II on the Critical/Uncritical Use of "Jesus" ----- Elliott #1709

Yesterday (25Apr83) the great historian Trevor-Roper backed down: maybe they are not authentic documents from Hitler; though they are certainly from "Hitler," i. e., from his influence stream. So our Gospels, though not directly from Jesus, are from "Jesus," i. e., from his influence stream. In the Hitler documents case, literary-historical criticism has the advantage to knowing much, independently, about Hitler; in the Gospels case, the disadvantage of knowing almost nothing, independently of these documents, about Jesus. But two relative advantages: (1) The Jesus impulse or influence stream has been mirrored off of, and appropriated by, virtually all earth's cultures; and (2) We who open our hearts to Jesus know him "in the Spirit" (which means at least, but I believe more than, that throngs of human beings experience themselves as in communion with Jesus as with a god, as with God), whereas posthumous communion with Hitler did not occur (and Neo-Nazis have been nowhere potent)...Despite modern historiography's caveats, pop Xny continues to identify Jesus (the historical person) with "Jesus" (the Gospel's central personage, the Godman of Christian--including my--devotion)...ASSIGNMENT FROM GOD: We devout Christians are to make, beyond what was possible for any previous Christian generation, an advance on worshipping the Lord our God "with all your mind." It has been our scholars, more than the scholars of any other folk, who have developed critical history (the archeopsychosociolinguistic skills bringing humanity closer than ever before to "what really happened and what it really meant to those to whom it happened")...Characteristics of this new Xn "mind": honesty, scientific method, humility (including claims-modesty), humanity, humor, the rhythm of the saint/scholar mental process...For a half century I've given attention to the Bible in the original languages, and do so daily: I do not neglect the wording of "the Word of God," as some assume I must since I play "fast and loose with the Bible" (!). For decades I've preached that we Christians must be FREE in the Bible (by mastering its contents), through the Bible (by living its living Message), with the Bible (by using it in church-and-world ministry), and from the Bible (by dynamic equivalence, i. e., being faithful in our life and world to the Spirit-movement in the lives and worlds from which, by production and transmission, the Bible has come to us)...Here I continue #1707's notes:

5. The God/man tension of the incarnation is resolved (1) in gnosticism in favor of the God and (2) in historicism in favor of the man. When as in Jesus-devotion we tilt toward the God side, space-time fades; and one effect is the obliterating of the fact that our Lord died as a young man, 30 years old. (Irenaeus, at 86, said Jesus couldn't have died younger than 86--a logical, though nutty, conclusion from I.'s conviction that his Lord experienced everything he himself had experienced.) Now, at 30 I'd been teaching four years in a seminary and got fired for intransigence, radicalism approaching blasphemy, and causing an uproar by claiming that all the errors in the Bible are inspired (and, unbeknownst to me, a student recorded my 1948 chapel swansong, which I still have--so I can feel again how I felt then). If I'm to identify with my Lord in his humanity, do I not at age 65 have to imagine myself back to age 30? And, to complete the cycle, must I not also imagine him forward to age 65? Or is my radical incarnationalism too radical? I think not. Just to take one subject, \$: at 30, I had a family, yet didn't let that fact tailor my witness so as not to get fired; a *fortiori*, wouldn't one expect familyless Jesus to be \$-free and warn of \$-entanglements? The youth of the past within each of us warns against ideologizing the wisdom of the later years, and the young Jesus forever warns his Church to renew its youth while not forgetting the lessons of its centuries.... Last week (Apr/83), aging Yippie-founder Abbie Hoffman, famous for his "Don't trust anyone over 30," warned a college audience "Don't trust anyone under 30." He was both right and wrong both times!

6. My #70 treats of Jesus' inner life as more than a mirror of my/our own. How now are we to think/feel/act/use the divine sanction "in Jesus' name"?