

A Pilgrimage with Jesus of Nazareth

Daniel Theron

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“At times, there have been tremendous spurts of accomplishment by segments of mankind,” Daniel Theron writes, “each of which had sooner or later attained its zenith, reached a plateau, and then faded away into history, as if the inspiration, or whatever had propelled these accomplishments, had run its course and had fulfilled its mission.”

In *A Pilgrimage with Jesus of Nazareth*, Theron suggests that Jesus lived at a time when one influence had run its course and the seed of another was beginning to sprout. He sees our own times of change and challenge in a similar light, when the accretions of superstition and tradition create drag and dissatisfaction, and a response from the Christian Church is necessary. To this end, he has examined the oral and written sources of information about Jesus of Nazareth to arrive at the most accurate information regarding his life and teachings. His conclusions avoid unsupported dogmatic tradition, yet affirm a solid basis for faith.

After looking closely at the early documents and their development, as well as the development and influence of Paul's theology on the early Church, Theron reviews the life and teachings of Jesus. Regarding the Sermon on the Mount, he writes, “The fact that the sermon's material is spread out in various places in Luke, strengthens the opinion that it was in all probability, never delivered all at once in the form in which Matthew presents it.” Although he questions the documentation and the form of the writings, he still asserts, “this does not take away that its content...is of much value in determining the teachings of Jesus.”

Theron also regards the doctrine of the trinity as a later, erroneous development; he prefers the Unitarian view. And in his questioning of tradition, he sometimes leaves the literal interpretation. Many take the spilling of blood and water (lymph) when Jesus' side is pierced to be undeniable proof of his death. Yet for Theron, it becomes, “most likely one of the writer's symbolic touches, for upon death the heart stops pumping, and the circulation of the blood stops. Symbolically, it would signify baptism and at least part of the Eucharist as later celebrated by Christianity.”

Theron's aim is to remove the impediments to a new generation's acceptance of Christianity by debunking narrow, radical, and superstitious traditions which were developed by an earlier unscientific culture after Jesus' earthly ministry.

While the book refers to a few sources, and there are a few footnotes and a ten page index, there is no bibliography. Theron's critical methods and conclusions will not be well received by the more conservative sects of Christianity. Still others will think he is not severe enough in his criticisms. But those who consider reason and a scholarly approach to the life of Jesus important may wish to examine Theron's conclusions.

DAVID GEORGE (July 1, 2010)

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