

PREFACE

THE book here translated is offered to the English-speaking public in the belief that it sets before them, as no other book has ever done, the history of the struggle which the best-equipped intellects of the modern world have gone through in endeavouring to realise for themselves the historical personality of our Lord.

Every one nowadays is aware that traditional Christian doctrine about Jesus Christ is encompassed with difficulties, and that many of the statements in the Gospels appear incredible in the light of modern views of history and nature. But when the alternative of "Jesus or Christ" is put forward, as it has been in a recent publication, or when we are bidden to choose between the Jesus of history and the Christ of dogma, few except professed students know what a protean and kaleidoscopic figure the "Jesus of history" is. Like the Christ in the Apocryphal Acts of John, He has appeared in different forms to different minds. "We know Him right well," says Professor Weinel.¹ What a claim!

Among the many bold paradoxes enunciated in this history of the Quest, there is one that meets us at the outset, about which a few words may be said here, if only to encourage those to persevere to the end who might otherwise be repelled half-way—the paradox that the greatest attempts to write a Life of Jesus have been written with hate.² It is in full accordance with this faith that Dr. Schweitzer gives, in paragraph after paragraph, the undiluted expression of the views of men who agree only in their unflinching desire to attain historical truth. We are not accustomed to be so ruthless in England. We sometimes tend to forget that the Gospel has moved the world, and we think our faith and devotion to it so tender and delicate a thing that it will break, if it be not handled with the utmost circumspection. So we become dominated

¹ Quoted by Dr. Inge in the *Hibbert Journal* for Jan. 1910, p. 438 (from "Jesus or Christ," p. 32).

² "Quest," p. 4.