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History and the Gospel

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HISTORY and the gospel—is this a meaningful, or meaningless, collocation of two terms? We are frequently told today that the task of extracting historical data from the four Gospels is impossible, and in any case illegitimate. But the people who tell us that are for the most part theologians, not historians. Whether the task of extracting historical data from the Gospels is impossible or not is for the historian to discover, not for the theologian to tell him; and one thing that no self-respecting historian will allow himself to be told is that his quest is illegitimate.

The quest has often been called the quest of the historical Jesus. The old quest of the historical Jesus is reckoned to have reached its terminus with the appearance of Albert Schweitzer's work which bears that title in its English translation;¹ nowadays there is talk of a new quest of the historical Jesus,² but there is considerable doubt whether the figure recovered by this quest is one which can properly be called the *historical* Jesus. The Jesus of the primitive apostolic preaching—yes; but there are some who hold up an arresting hand and forbid us to cross the boundary which lies between the Jesus of the early preaching and the Jesus of history as the historian understands history.

We could consider as a parallel the case of St Patrick.³ Our sources for reconstructing Patrick's career are unpromising enough, and much scantier than our sources for the ministry of Jesus. From Patrick himself we have his *Confession*, his *Letter to the Subjects of Coroticus*, and some ecclesiastical canons. Later sources for his sayings and doings contain a varying admixture of legend. The data are so ambiguous that

¹ A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1910), translated from *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen, 1906).

² Cf. J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1959).

³ Cf. C. J. Cadoux: 'I venture to say that our means of truthfully telling the life-story of Jesus are quite as good and plentiful as they are for many another character of bygone days—say St Patrick or St Francis—regarding whom no one has a word to say by way of discouraging the attempt to tell their full life-story' (*The Life of Jesus* [Pelican Books, 1948], p. 18).

some scholars have recently postulated the existence of two St Patricks.¹ Yet what is the result of historical criticism of this material? Not only are the main outlines of Patrick's career reasonably clear, but we get a convincing and attractive picture of the humble, kindly and powerful personality of the man himself.

When we are dealing with Patrick, however, no one thinks of holding up his hand and saying: The materials for reconstructing the historical career of Patrick do not exist, and it is illegitimate to try to reconstruct it; that is not the purpose for which the *Confession* and the *Letter to the Subjects of Coroticus* were composed! And if anyone were so foolish as to say so, we should simply reply: We know that is not the purpose for which these documents were composed, but nevertheless they are available for the historian to use, with all proper critical safeguards, as basic sources for his work.

I. *The Gospels as Sources*

We must look, then, at our primary sources for the historic mission of Jesus—and that, in the first instance, means the four Gospels.² If we wish to establish what, as a matter of history, Jesus actually said and did, we cannot ignore their evidence. We know that the Evangelists did not set out to be historiographers or even biographers. But they did set out to bear witness, or to preserve the witness of others, to what they believed actually to have happened; and their writings provide the historian of early Christianity with the raw material of his craft.

On the source criticism of the Gospels it is not necessary to say much here. So far as the three Synoptic Gospels are concerned, it is easy to distinguish the Markan material in all three, the non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke (conveniently labelled Q), the special material of Luke (L) and the special material of Matthew (M). These four bodies of material are not generally conceived today as four separate documents on which the Synoptic Evangelists variously drew, but that two of them represent distinct documents is fairly certain. Mark, of course, we know; and the arguments for treating his record as

¹ Cf. T. O'Rahilly, *The Two Patricks* (Dublin, 1942).

² An earlier source is provided by the letters of Paul which, however, were addressed to people who had already been taught the story of Jesus, so that he did not need to tell them what they knew. Yet it is surprising how much of an outline of the story and teaching of Jesus can be reconstructed from incidental references in Paul's letters. See p. 133 below; cf. also E. Jünger, *Paulus und Jesus* (Tübingen, 1962).

prior to those of Matthew and Luke are in my eyes as valid as ever.¹ Nor am I disposed to follow the current fashion of 'dispensing with Q'² (or rather with the hypothesis of a document from which the First and Third Evangelists drew their Q material); attempts to account for the non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke apart from the Q hypothesis strike me much more unconvincing than anything in the hypothesis itself. I envisage, perhaps in the early fifties of the first century, the appearance of a compilation based on the model of the Old Testament prophetic books—'The Book of the Prophet Jesus', we might call it—in which, after an account of the inauguration of the Prophet's public ministry, his 'oracles'³ were arranged in a brief narrative framework, but which did not record the Prophet's death (precisely as no Old Testament prophet's death is recorded in the book which bears his name).⁴

The four bodies of material which have been mentioned as underlying our Synoptic accounts could no doubt be further sub-divided; for example, the nativity narratives of Matthew and Luke do not appear to be homogeneous with the rest of the special material in these two Gospels. But when we reach this point, we have left source criticism behind; we have already pressed our quest back to a stage where form criticism promises to help us much more than source criticism ever could.

A German writer⁵ has recently remarked that outside Germany the form-critical method is either rejected or else (as with Dr Vincent Taylor)⁶ limited to a means of formally classifying the traditional material. It is denied, he says (and, from his point of view, denied

¹ Cf. most recently, N. B. Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels* (London, 1964).

² Cf. A. M. Farrer, 'On Dispensing with Q' in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford, 1955), pp. 55 ff.

³ Cf. the use of 'oracles' in the fragment of Papias which, I am disposed to think, refers to such a compilation as this: 'Matthew compiled the oracles (τὰ λόγια) in the Hebrew speech, and everyone interpreted them as best he could' (Euseb. *H.E.* iii.39.16). Cf. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London, 1949), pp. 15 ff.

⁴ T. W. Manson suggested that in this work the sayings of Jesus were arranged under four topics: (1) 'Jesus and John the Baptist'; (2) 'Jesus and His Disciples'; (3) 'Jesus and His Opponents'; (4) 'Jesus and the Future' (*The Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 39 ff.).

⁵ Hans Conzelmann, art. 'Jesus Christus', *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edn., III (Tübingen, 1959), col. 621; cf. also H. Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus* (London, 1963), pp. 79 f.

⁶ Cf. V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London, 1933).

wrongly), that it can lead to conclusions about the historical genuineness or otherwise of the material on which it works.

No one, I suppose, has expressed this non-German scepticism about the value of form criticism in more characteristically down-to-earth language than my predecessor, T. W. Manson. 'Strictly', he said, 'the term "form-criticism" should be reserved for the study of the various units of narrative and teaching, which go to make up the Gospels, in respect of their form alone. . . . But a paragraph of Mark is not a penny the better or the worse for being labelled, "Apothegm" or "Pronouncement Story" or "Paradigm". In fact if Form-criticism had stuck to its proper business, it would not have made any real stir. We should have taken it as we take the forms of Hebrew poetry or the forms of musical composition.'¹

How then has form criticism not stuck to its proper business? Because, said Manson, it got mixed up with two other things. One was K. L. Schmidt's theory that the narrative of Mark, for the greater part, consisted of disconnected units joined together by 'editorial cement' devoid of any historical value of its own²; the other was the doctrine of the *Sitz im Leben*, the 'life-setting.' In saying this, Manson was defining form criticism a good deal more narrowly than is commonly done. Usually such a study as K. L. Schmidt's and the endeavour to establish the life-setting of the component elements in the gospel tradition would be regarded as coming within the province of form criticism. Schmidt aimed at determining the character or form of the tradition as it came into Mark's hands, while a study of the life-setting can throw light on the form which an incident or saying originally took,³ or on the form in which it was transmitted in the believing community.

¹ In a 1949 address, 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus—Continued', published posthumously in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester, 1962), pp. 3 ff.; the quotation is from pp. 4 f.

² K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin, 1919); cf. C. H. Dodd's well-known critique of his thesis in 'The Framework of the Gospel Narrative', *Expository Times*, 43 (1931-32), pp. 396 ff., reprinted in his *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), pp. 1 ff., in which he argues that the 'editorial cement' is actually an independent kerygmatic outline. Cf. further D. E. Nineham's critique of Dodd's argument in 'The Order of Events in St. Mark's Gospel—An Examination of Dr. Dodd's Hypothesis', *Studies in the Gospels*, pp. 223 ff.

³ Thus William Manson has shown how the saying about 'this mountain' in Mark xi. 23 is illuminated if its life-setting was really, as Mark represents it, under the shadow of the Mount of Olives; it may then be an application of Zech. xiv. 4 (*Jesus the Messiah* [London, 1943], pp. 29 f., 39 f.).

In its extremer formulations, however, the doctrine of the life-setting lays it down that if a saying or action ascribed to Christ in the Gospels reflects the faith of the church after the resurrection, it must be regarded as a creation of the church rather than an authentic saying or action of Jesus, and that if a parallel saying or action is elsewhere attributed to some rabbi, it must be regarded as a Jewish tradition which has come to be erroneously ascribed to Jesus.¹ It would follow that only sayings or actions unparalleled in the early church or in Jewish tradition could with any confidence be accepted as authentic. But this involves the two utterly improbable assumptions: (a) that there was no continuity between the post-resurrection faith of the church and the ministry of Jesus,² and (b) that the teaching of Jesus and of the rabbis never overlapped at any point.

The study of the forms in which the various units of gospel tradition were preserved and transmitted has been handicapped, not promoted, by excessive scepticism of this *a priori* kind. Form criticism which has been unhampered by such scepticism has led to conclusions of considerable positive value for Gospel study, as some work by C. H. Dodd,³ William Manson⁴ and Joachim Jeremias⁵ shows. The value is perhaps greatest when what was originally one and the same unit of teaching or narrative can be shown to have been handed down along two separate lines in two different 'forms'; we are thus enabled to

¹ Cf. R. H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (London, 1963), p. 26; H. Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 107.

² T. W. Manson made what might seem to be an elementary point, but a point none the less necessary, when he remarked that concerning the life-setting of any incident or saying in the Gospels we may ask whether it is a setting in the life of Jesus or a setting in the life of the early church, adding: 'It is sometimes overlooked that an affirmative answer to the latter alternative does not automatically carry with it a negative answer to the former' ('Is it possible to write a Life of Christ?' *Expository Times*, 53 [1941-42], p. 249).

³ E.g. his *History and the Gospel* (London, 1938).

⁴ *Jesus the Messiah* (London, 1943).

⁵ Especially in *The Parables of Jesus* (2nd English edn., London, 1963); cf. his article 'The Present Position in the Controversy concerning the Historical Jesus', *Expository Times*, 69 (1957-58), pp. 333 ff., where he claims that form criticism helps us to remove a later Hellenistic layer which has overlain an earlier Palestinian layer, and so to move back from a setting in the life of the early church to a setting in the life of Jesus. But even this modest claim (which is illustrated by his work on the parables) must be received with caution, if only because Palestine itself was not free from Hellenistic influences, and there were Hellenists in the primitive Jerusalem church, if not indeed among the companions of Jesus during His ministry.

envisage the material of the unit as it was before it began to be transmitted.¹

There is a third thing (in addition to the two mentioned by T. W. Manson) with which form criticism has been mixed up, and that is the excessively sceptical evaluation of the gospel history which marks the work of Professor Rudolf Bultmann. Since Bultmann was a pioneer in the form criticism of the Gospels, it is no doubt inevitable that his form criticism and his historical scepticism should be mixed up together, although logically the two are distinct. To quote T. W. Manson again, 'Professor Bultmann's *History of the Synoptic Tradition* is an account, not of how the life of Jesus produced the tradition, but of how the tradition produced the life of Jesus. And when the work of the tradition has been undone, there is very little of Jesus left. I may remark in passing that the disseminated incredulity of Bultmann's *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*² has its nemesis thirty years later in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*,³ in which a perfunctory thirty pages or so is devoted to the theology of Jesus himself, while a hundred or more are occupied with an imaginary account of the theology of the anonymous and otherwise unknown "Hellenistic Communities".⁴ Professor Manson reasonably concludes his examination of this phase of Gospel criticism with a plea for 'a return to the study of the Gospels as historical documents concerning Jesus of Nazareth, rather than as psychological case-material concerning the early Christians'.⁵

One of the most interesting of recent developments in Gospel study has been a fresh appraisal of the historical value of the Fourth Gospel. In some quarters this has been influenced by the discovery and study of the Qumran literature; in others it has been the result of further study of this Gospel itself in its New Testament context.

At the 'Four Gospels Congress' held in Oxford in 1957,⁶ for example, two important papers on the Fourth Gospel were read by Professor

¹ For examples of this approach, cf. C. H. Dodd, 'The Dialogue Form in the Gospels', *Bulletin of John Rylands Library*, 37 (1954-55), pp. 54 ff.; 'The Appearances of the Risen Christ', *Studies in the Gospels* (ed. D. E. Nineham), pp. 9 ff.

² Now available in an English translation, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford, 1963).

³ Now available in an English translation, *Theology of the New Testament* (London, Vol. I, 1952; Vol. II, 1955).

⁴ *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, pp. 6 f.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁶ The proceedings are available in K. Aland et al. (ed.), *Studia Evangelica, Texte und Untersuchungen* 73 (Berlin, 1959); a selection of the papers was published in *The Gospels Reconsidered* (Oxford, 1960).

W. C. van Unnik of Utrecht and by the Bishop of Woolwich—by the former on 'The Purpose of St John's Gospel'¹ and by the latter on 'The New Look on the Fourth Gospel'.² Professor van Unnik argues that this Gospel was basically a missionary document designed to lead Jewish readers to faith in Christ. One of his arguments is the occurrence of the title 'Christ' or 'Messiah' in the Evangelist's own statement of his purpose: 'these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ . . .' (John xx. 31). I agree, but I would go farther. John's purpose is to lead Jewish and Gentile readers of the Hellenistic world towards the end of the first century to faith in Jesus: for Jewish readers this will mean faith in Jesus as the Christ, but for Gentile readers to whom a call to believe in Him as the Christ would not be immediately relevant he adds: '. . . believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' His desire is that both classes of readers, so believing in Jesus, might have 'life in his name'.

Bishop Robinson in his paper takes issue with 'five generally agreed presuppositions' on which current critical orthodoxy regarding this Gospel has been accustomed to rest. 'These are: (1) That the fourth Evangelist is dependent on sources, including (normally) one or more of the Synoptic Gospels. (2) That his own background is other than that of the events and teaching he is purporting to record. (3) That he is not to be regarded, seriously, as a witness to the Jesus of history, but simply to the Christ of faith. (4) That he represents the end-term of theological development in first-century Christianity. (5) That he is not himself the Apostle John nor a direct eyewitness.'³ His conclusion is that the crucial question is whether the distinctive tradition of the ministry of Jesus preserved in this Gospel came 'out of the blue' around A.D. 100. 'Or is there a real continuity not merely in the memory of one old man, but in the life of an on-going community, with the earliest days of Christianity? What, I think, fundamentally distinguishes the "new look" on the fourth Gospel is that it answers that question in the affirmative.'⁴

Professor Dodd, whose contributions to the study of the Fourth Gospel have made him *facile princeps* among contemporary Johannine students, has pointed out how, beneath the diversity of dialogue form

¹ *Studia Evangelica*, pp. 382 ff.; *The Gospels Reconsidered*, pp. 167 ff.

² *Studia Evangelica*, pp. 338 ff.; *The Gospels Reconsidered*, pp. 154 ff.; reprinted in J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London, 1962), pp. 94 ff.

³ *The Gospels Reconsidered*, p. 155; *Twelve New Testament Studies*, p. 95.

⁴ *The Gospels Reconsidered*, p. 166; *Twelve New Testament Studies*, p. 106.

as between the Synoptic Gospels and John's there is at times a community of theme which suggests that the Synoptic and Johannine traditions alike go back to an earlier 'unformed' tradition.¹ Not only so, but he envisages the probability that more of this 'unformed' tradition of Jesus' teaching lies behind dialogues in the Fourth Gospel which have no parallel in the Synoptic tradition, although they can be integrated with it. The recognition of such material must call for very delicate judgment, but the quest, as Professor Dodd sees it, is far from hopeless.

Not only in its discourses and dialogues, but in its narratives, the Johannine account is worthy of at least as much respect as the Synoptic accounts.² This is so, for example, with its tradition of an earlier phase of our Lord's ministry in the south of Palestine, simultaneous with the later phase of John the Baptist's activity, and also with its presentation of the events of Holy Week, the chronology of which has been illuminated by the study of calendrical texts from Qumran.³

The upshot of all this is that our task is made in a sense more difficult rather than easier. At one time those who believed that the evidence of the Fourth Gospel could be largely ignored in any attempt to reconstruct the course of our Lord's ministry felt themselves able to reconstruct it in terms of the Synoptic—that is, substantially, the Markan—framework. Now, let me say that despite all that has been urged to the contrary I still consider that the Markan framework suggests a sequence and development in the story of the ministry which is too spontaneous to be artificial and too logical to be accidental. But it is no longer feasible to treat the material fitted into this framework in such a way as to distinguish (say) between the optimism of Jesus' hope of the kingdom of God in the earlier period of His ministry and His gloomier forebodings from Caesarea Philippi onwards.⁴ Nor is it feasible to treat the Markan outline as being so watertight that anything in the Johannine narrative which cannot be readily fitted into it (the raising of Lazarus, for example) must for that simple reason be set aside as historically suspect.⁵

¹ Cf. the articles referred to on p. 126, n. 1 above, and now pre-eminently his *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambr'dge, 1963).

² Cf. also A. J. B. Higgins, *The Historicity of the Fourth Gospel* (London, 1960).

³ Cf. A. Jaubert, *La Date de la Cène* (Paris, 1957); 'Jésus et le Calendrier de Qumrân', *New Testament Studies*, 7 (1960-61), pp. 1 ff.

⁴ Cf. C. J. Cadoux, *The Historic Mission of Jesus* (London, 1941), pp. 183 ff.

⁵ Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission* (3rd edn., Edinburgh, 1911), pp. vii f., 221 f.

If, however, the Johannine tradition claims to be regarded as equally primitive with the Markan—and Professor Dodd pointed out many years ago that the Second and the Fourth Gospels are the two which preserve the essential kerygmatic outline most faithfully¹—the historian's problem is the more complicated. Neither the Johannine nor the Markan framework can be made the norm to which the other must be accommodated.

On the other hand, the difficulties must not be exaggerated. If the Markan and Johannine traditions are independent, the greater weight attaches to those features in which they concur. In addition to their agreement in associating the beginning of Jesus' public life with the ministry of John the Baptist, and in the main outlines of the passion story at the end of His public life, special attention should be directed to the way in which both Mark and John treat the feeding of the multitude and Peter's confession which followed it as a turning point in the ministry of Jesus.² The more I reflect on this coincidence, the greater importance it assumes in my mind.

II. *Historical Scepticism*

The historical scepticism of Professor Bultmann and his school, which is paralleled in some parts of the English-speaking world of New Testament scholarship, is unlike the scepticism of earlier generations. Whereas the older scepticism endeavoured by the removal of the outer theological layers in the Gospels to get back to a historical Jesus who could still be a moral and religious guide to the undogmatic heirs of the enlightenment, the new scepticism has recognised that the Gospel material is theological through and through, so that when the last layer has been peeled off we are left with little more than the residual affirmation: 'crucified under Pontius Pilate.' Professor Dodd might point out a quarter of a century ago that, no matter how we classify the Gospel materials, all parts of the record agree in emphasising the messianic significance of all that Jesus said and did: 'we can find no alternative tradition, excavate as we will in the successive strata of the gospels.'³ The modern scepticism agrees with his findings, but dissents from his conclusions, which were that this messianic portrayal of Jesus has strong claims to be accepted as the authentic portrayal of the historical Jesus. It holds rather that since the material is theological

¹ *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, 1936), p. 165.

² Mark viii. 29; John vi. 68 f.

³ *History and the Gospel*, p. 103.

through and through, the history eludes us almost completely; and it bids us come to terms with this state of affairs and be thankful for the theology, since we cannot have the history.

The new scepticism is thus much more radical than the older scepticism, so far as the Jesus of history is concerned. At the turn of the century P. W. Schmiedel isolated nine passages in the Synoptic Gospels which, he said, 'might be called the foundation-pillars for a truly scientific life of Jesus'.¹ Some shrewd observers at the time recognised that Schmiedel was conceding more than he knew since, for all his belief that these passages ran so counter to later tendencies that they were not likely to be inventions of the church, some of them implied quite a high Christology. But now we find Professor Conzelmann saying of one of these 'pillar' passages (Jesus' cry of dereliction on the cross): 'The objection that this saying would not have been put into his mouth, if he had not actually uttered it, fails to recognise the character of the narrative. This saying was taken up in order to portray his death as fulfilment, and thereby to overcome the "scandal" of the cross. The saying therefore should not be evaluated psychologically, in order to reconstruct the feelings of the dying Jesus.'² With the last sentence we may be disposed to agree; but as for the rest of the statement, my reaction to it—as to so many other statements which I find in the writings of this school—is to reflect that assertion is not proof.

That the Gospel narrative, and especially the passion narrative, should be recorded in the language of Old Testament fulfilment is not surprising when we remember Jesus' insistence that in His ministry and supremely in His passion the scriptures must be and in fact were being fulfilled. I know it will be said that this is an example of the reading back into His own life and teaching of a theme that was developed for apologetic and other purposes in the early church. That the theme of fulfilment was developed in the early church is clear, but the manner in which it was developed can best be explained if Jesus first laid down for His disciples the guiding lines of Old Testament interpretation—that He did for them in one way what the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness did for his community in another

¹ *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, II (London, 1901), art. 'Gospels', cols. 1881-1883. The nine passages are Mark x. 17 f.; Matt. xii. 31 f.; Mark iii. 21; Mark xiii. 32; Mark xv. 34 (= Matt. xxvii. 46); Mark viii. 12; Mark vi. 5 f.; Mark viii. 14-21; Matt. xi. 5 (= Luke vii. 22).

² *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edn., III, cols. 646 f.

way. I have tried to show elsewhere, with reference to one group of Old Testament *testimonia* which play a substantial part in the passion narrative (those drawn from Zech. ix-xiv), that Jesus led the way in speaking of His passion to His disciples in terms of these oracles (especially the oracle of the smitten shepherd in Zech. xiii. 7); the Evangelists, more particularly the later ones, dotted the i's and crossed the t's of this pattern of prediction and fulfilment, but the initial impetus was given by Jesus Himself. The oracles were not used to create but to explain the recorded events.¹

Even the geographical data, the sacred sites and ways, which we might have thought were objective enough, have been interpreted as theologumena. For example: Luke, says one writer, can locate John the Baptist neither in Galilee nor in Judaea, for these were both areas of Jesus' activity; John is therefore given a marginal location, in the wilderness and the Jordan valley. (But did not John preach and baptize there, as a matter of history?) In order to be baptised by John, of course, Jesus must come to Jordan, but since the Jordan is John's territory, Jesus has nothing more to do with the Jordan or its neighbourhood. But does not Luke bring Jesus to Jericho later in his Gospel (xviii. 35 ff.)? Yes, but it is questionable whether Luke knew that Jericho is near the Jordan!² As for Mark's Gospel, its chronological and geographical outline, the same writer assures us, 'is not ancient tradition, but literary redaction. . . . The geographical framework of our oldest Gospel is an editorial construction following the schema "action in Galilee, passion in Jerusalem"' (with Mark x as the transition between the two; cf. Lohmeyer).³ However, we need not take too much account of this: behind the schema, 'of course, lies historical information'.⁴ Of course it does: Galilee *was* the main region of Jesus' public ministry, and Jerusalem *was* the place where He was crucified; if members of the early church theologised these data (and I am not persuaded that they did, at least to anything like the extent postulated by E. Lohmeyer⁵

¹ 'The Book of Zechariah and the Passion Narrative', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 43 (1960-61), pp. 336 ff. On the general subject see R. V. G. Tasker, *The OT in the NT* (2nd edn., London, 1954); C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London, 1952); B. Lindars, *NT Apologetic* (London, 1961).

² H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (Tübingen, 1954), p. 11; Eng. tr., *The Theology of St. Luke* (London, 1960), p. 19. Even if Luke was personally unacquainted with that district of Palestine, he had presumably read Joshua and 2 Kings, where Jericho's proximity to the Jordan is made plain.

³ RGG III, col. 622.

⁴ *Ibid.* col. 627.

⁵ *Galiläa und Jerusalem* (Göttingen, 1936).

and R. H. Lightfoot),¹ at any rate the data were historical data before theological significance was read into them.

But it is extremely interesting right now to mark the developments within the Bultmann school, a school whose influence is second to none. (In Germany certainly, and to some extent beyond it, Bultmann is a much more potent name today than Barth.)

If you look, for example, at Günther Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth*,² you will see that this distinguished disciple of Bultmann, while sceptical by the British standards of (say) C. H. Dodd and Vincent Taylor, is more optimistic than his teacher about the possibility of extracting from our records a picture of Jesus' person and career. Nor does he find such a hiatus as Bultmann does between the ministry of Jesus and the message of the primitive church. Whereas Bultmann places the shift from the old age to the new between Jesus and Paul, Bornkamm places it between John the Baptist and Jesus—a judgment which we can embrace the more readily because, according to the Evangelists, that is where Jesus placed it!

Other members of the Bultmann school, such as Ernst Käsemann and Ernst Fuchs, have also reacted against the teaching of the *maestro*, but not all in the same direction. Käsemann, for instance, has recently come to view all four Gospels as arising out of the apocalyptic understanding of history in the earliest Christianity³; Fuchs has remarked that whereas 'we formerly endeavoured to interpret the historical Jesus with the help of the primitive Christian kerygma, today we endeavour rather to interpret this kerygma with the help of the historical Jesus—the two lines of investigation are mutually complementary'.⁴

In such a situation as this there is every encouragement for the historian of Christian origins to press straight forward as the road opens up before him. There is no need to listen to those who tell him that his task is vain and improper. He knows that the Evangelists were not objective and dispassionate researchers, producing Ph.D. theses—not even Luke, for all his care to 'trace the course of all things accurately

¹ *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels* (London, 1937).

² Eng. tr., London, 1960.

³ 'Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie', *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, 57 (1960), pp. 162 ff. Cf. also his essay 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus' now translated in *Essays on NT Themes* (London 1964), pp. 15ff.

⁴ *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus* (Tübingen, 1960), preface. Cf. also the translated volume of his *Studies of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1964).

from the beginning' (Luke i. 3). Of course not; they were Christians, deeply committed men. They viewed the ministry of Jesus in the light of His resurrection (or, as some prefer to say, in the light of the Easter event). Their aim was to commend the Saviour to others. All four of them, like John, were concerned in one way or another so to write that their readers should believe in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, and by so believing have life in His name.¹

The historian of Christian origins knows, moreover, that 'if the nineteenth-century view of history found its meaningful expression in "the historical Jesus", the twentieth century has found its approach already anticipated in the *kerygma*'.² But what was this *kerygma*, this proclamation of God's good news in Christ? It was, for the first thirty years or so, substantially the witness of the disciples of Christ to what they had seen and heard. If one of the principal heralds of the *kerygma*, Paul, had not himself seen and heard the works and words of Jesus, he was careful to acquire the necessary information from eye-witnesses so that he could deliver to others what he himself had first received.³ Dr Vincent Taylor found it expedient a quarter of a century ago to remind certain leading form critics that the apostles and other original followers of Jesus were not translated to heaven immediately after His resurrection, as one would almost be forced to suppose if some of their theories were true.⁴ We do have eyewitness testimony in the Gospels—more of it than is commonly recognised today. Luke knew what he was about when he assured Theophilus that, although he himself had not been present at most of the events described in his twofold history, he had access to information handed down by 'those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word' (Luke i. 3). Eye-witness testimony was highly regarded in his day, for many ordinary purposes and especially in Roman law. There was a time, too, when eye-witness testimony was highly regarded by historical researchers. It was an important feature of Thucydides' history, for example, that he himself played a leading part in the earlier stages of

¹ John xx. 31.

² J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 39.

³ It is noteworthy that Paul, in his catalogue of resurrection appearances in 1 Cor. xv. 5 ff., mentions appearances to two individuals, 'Cephas' and James—the only two members of the apostolic company whom he met when he visited Jerusalem in the third year after his conversion to have an interview with the former (Gal. i. 18). Cf. F. F. Bruce, 'When is a Gospel not a Gospel?' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 45 (1962-63), pp. 329 ff.

⁴ *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, p. 41.

the Peloponnesian War which he records. Nowadays, however, we hear doubts expressed about the value of such testimony.

In his article in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for October 1960 on 'Eye-witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition',¹ Professor D. E. Nineham speaks of the task of today's historian of Christian origins as being 'to wring truth relevant to the history of Jesus from the increasing stock of remains of the Judaism of his time'.² This is true, since our primary sources, the New Testament records, have been so thoroughly sifted and resifted. But in relation to these records themselves, or at least to the element of eye-witness evidence which they claim to contain, he shows himself unduly influenced by some unqualified remarks of R. G. Collingwood, whom he quotes as follows:

If anyone else, no matter who, even a very learned historian, or an eyewitness, or a person in the confidence of the man who did the thing he is inquiring into, or even the man who did it himself, hands him [the student of history] on a plate a ready-made answer to his question, all he can do is to reject it: not because he thinks his informant is trying to deceive him, or is himself deceived, but because if he accepts it he is giving up his autonomy as an historian and allowing someone else to do for him what, if he is a scientific thinker, he can only do for himself.³

But surely, if the historian is handed 'on a plate' a ready-made answer by someone who was involved in the situation which he is reconstructing, he will not reject it out of hand. He will not treat it as a ready-made answer, but he will welcome it as a material piece of evidence. For example, if he is trying to establish what really happened on the Damascus road, he will not ignore Paul's own explanation of

¹ New series, II (1960), pp. 253 ff.

² *Ibid.* p. 260.

³ *Ibid.* p. 258; the quotation comes from Collingwood's posthumously published *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), p. 256. In this section of the work—a section, incidentally, which his editor, Sir Malcolm Knox, included 'with some misgivings' (*ibid.* p. vi)—Collingwood pushes to extremes what, as elsewhere set forth by him, is a very sound case in vindication of the historian's right to be a true historian, free to exercise his historical judgment on all the material that comes his way. But one may question whether his work represents such a 'Copernican revolution' in historical study as he himself held (*ibid.* pp. 236, 240); cf. Professor Nineham's remarks on 'the "Collingwoodian" revolution in historical studies' which he sums up by saying that 'the modern historian is no longer willing to set the seal of the word "historical" on events, simply because an authority or authorities exist which allege that they happened' (*The Church's Use of the Bible Past and Present* [London, 1963], p. 156). But did any historian worthy of the name—that is, a scientific historian as distinct from a chronicler—ever take his material on trust just like that?

the event.¹ He will treat Paul's explanation as a material piece of evidence: the event must have been of such a character that this man, who was totally involved in it—this man, too, of whose antecedents and qualities we have a good deal of information—could only explain it in the way he does. Everyone experienced in law-court procedure knows that the testimony of eye-witnesses, not least the testimony of honest eye-witnesses, must be subjected to cross-examination in order to ascertain what really happened²; but nothing can take the place of the direct testimony of someone who was on the spot when it happened, and kept his eyes and ears open.

Since I have mentioned Paul in connection with eye-witness testimony, it may be relevant here to point out that Paul does not, as is sometimes alleged, disparage the eye-witness testimony of those who were companions of Jesus during His ministry when he speaks about no longer knowing Christ 'after the flesh' (2 Cor. v. 16). These words do not disown or deprecate any interest in the earthly life of Christ,³

¹ As in Gal. i. 11-17; 1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8 ff.; Phil. iii. 12.

² As indeed Collingwood himself says earlier: 'the historian puts his authorities in the witness-box, and by cross-questioning extorts from them information which in their original statements they have withheld, either because they did not wish to give it or because they did not possess it' (*The Idea of History*, p. 237). The distinction which he draws later (p. 268) between the juror and the historian is accidental rather than substantial.

³ Cf. R. Bultmann: 'We must not go back behind the *kerygma*, using it as a source in order to reconstruct a "historical Jesus" with his "messianic consciousness", his "inner life" or his "heroism". That would be precisely the *Χριστός κατὰ σάρκα* who belongs to the past. It is not the historical Jesus, but Jesus Christ the preached one, who is the Lord' (*Glauben und Verstehen*, I [Tübingen, 1961], p. 208). Bultmann feels that an appeal to history may on the one hand seem to preserve something of man's autonomy over against God in Christ, and on the other hand make the basis of faith something which is liable to change in the course of historical study. Indeed, his historical scepticism with regard to the life of Jesus and the gospel story is probably bound up with his insistence that the only Christ who matters for faith is the Christ with whose challenge man is confronted in the *kerygma*. But if the Christ of the *kerygma* is not also the Jesus of history, there is the danger that our faith may be placed in 'cunningly devised fables'. The Christian with a historical conscience can and should ask historical questions about the one whom he has believed. When Emil Brunner in one of his earlier works says (in similar vein to Bultmann) that 'Jesus of Nazareth, the rabbi, the so-called historical Jesus, was an object of no interest for the early Christians and it is of no interest today for those who have preserved some understanding of what Christian faith means' (*The Word and the World* [London, 1931], pp. 87 f.), his statement must be denied in both its parts. A corrective to such views is provided by P. Althaus, *The So-Called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus* (Eng. tr., Edinburgh, 1959).

nor do they suggest that the other apostles' earlier companionship with Him was now irrelevant, and of no spiritual advantage. The contrast which Paul is making is between his own present estimate of Christ and that which he had before his conversion, as is brought out very well in the New English Bible: 'With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any man; even if they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so now no longer. When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun.' Whatever Peter and Paul may have talked about during the fortnight that they spent together in Jerusalem in the third year after Paul's conversion,¹ we may be sure that Paul did not write off the story that Peter told him as so much knowledge of Christ 'after the flesh'.

III. *Jesus in His Historical Context*

When Professor Nineham says that we have to 'wring truth relevant to the history of Jesus from the increasing stock of remains of the Judaism of his time', we may perhaps say much the same thing with regard to the Gentile environment too; the history of Jesus can best be understood in the total historical context of His life.

Mark sums up Jesus' early Galilaean preaching in the words: 'The appointed time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent, and believe in the good news' (Mark i. 15). What would such words have meant in the setting in which they were spoken? This important question has sometimes been overlooked, even where we might most have expected it to receive attention. T. R. Glover, for instance, in *The Jesus of History*, 'does less than justice to the central theme of Christ's preaching, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand", and . . . does not sufficiently relate the mission of Jesus to the crisis in Israel's history which incorporation in the Roman Empire involved.' That was the judgment of his friend H. G. Wood.²

The Roman occupation of Judaea from 63 B.C. onwards did in fact lead more than one Jewish group to the conviction that the indestructible kingdom which (according to the book of Daniel) the God of heaven would one day set up was on the very eve of appearance. In particular, we know how this hope was stimulated among the Zealots, in the near-Essene community of Qumran, as well as in other pious

¹ Gal. i. 18.

² H. G. Wood, *Jesus in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1960), p. 123.

groups in Israel,¹ including (it appears) the families into which John the Baptist and Jesus were born.² We do well to ask what relation the hope of the coming kingdom as cherished by some of these groups bore to the hope of the kingdom as proclaimed by Jesus.

As for the Zealots, they (at least from the time of the revolt led by Judas of Galilee in A.D. 6) saw it as their duty to offer armed resistance to the Romans at every fitting opportunity, to give no countenance to their claims to imperial sovereignty over Israel, and to hasten the advent of the coming kingdom by violence—thorough-paced 'Fifth Monarchy Men'.³ There were others whose view (now attested by the Qumran texts) was that it was better to await God's time, but that when He gave the signal it would be their duty to co-operate with His purpose and play the leading part, under God and His holy angels, in the establishment and administration of the kingdom.⁴

In the first decade of the present century Dr Albert Schweitzer could write:

The apocalyptic movement in the time of Jesus is not connected with any historical event. It cannot be said, as Bruno Bauer rightly perceived, that we know anything about the Messianic expectations of the Jewish people at that time. . . . What is really remarkable about this wave of apocalyptic enthusiasm is the fact that it was called forth not by external events, but solely by the appearance of two great personalities, and subsides with their disappearance, without leaving among the people any trace, except a feeling of hatred towards the new sect.

The Baptist and Jesus are not, therefore, borne upon the current of a general eschatological movement. The period offers no events calculated to give an impulse to eschatological enthusiasm. They themselves set the times in motion by acting, by creating eschatological facts. It is this mighty creative force which constitutes the difficulty in grasping historically the eschatology of Jesus and the Baptist.⁵

Today, while the prophetic and creative activity of both John and Jesus can be acknowledged as heartily as ever, we can no longer say that, eschatologically speaking, there was 'silence all around'⁶ when

¹ E.g. the circle in which the 'Psalms of Solomon' were composed about the middle of the first century B.C.

² Luke i. 5 ff.; we may think of the hopes expressed in the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*, and cherished also by people like Simeon and Anna of Jerusalem (Luke ii. 25 ff., 36 ff.).

³ The most recent monograph on the Zealots is M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (Leiden, 1961).

⁴ Cf. one of the best accounts of these people, E. F. Sutcliffe, *The Monks of Qumran* (London, 1960).

⁵ *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 368.

⁶ *Ibid.*

they appeared. The Qumran discoveries, to mention no others, have provided us with just that 'general eschatological movement' of the closing decades B.C. and early decades A.D. which Dr Schweitzer could not find.

The community which had its headquarters at Qumran, north-west of the Dead Sea, for the best part of the two centuries preceding A.D. 70, seems to have been an Essene or near-Essene group.¹ There were some Essenes, associate members of the order, so to speak, who lived in the towns and villages of Judaea, while others withdrew from public life to embrace a coenobitic life in the wilderness of Judaea. Qumran may well have been the headquarters of the principal group of these 'separated' Essenes; we are assured by archaeologists that there is no other site which could answer to the description of the Essene settlement between Jericho and Engedi given by Pliny the elder.² But Professor Matthew Black³ has given reasons for thinking that the Essenes themselves were part of a wider movement of nonconformist Judaism which, he suggests, was divided into a northern and a southern group. The southern group was the milieu in which John the Baptist was born; the northern group was the milieu in which Jesus grew up. Not that either of them can be accounted for simply in terms of his milieu; both of them, in different ways, took a line which deviated sharply from that of their respective milieux. But we do have a background—an eschatologically-minded background at that—against which we can view their ministries with greater understanding than before.

There is a further point: this strain of nonconformist Judaism appears to have had close affinities with Samaritan theology (apart from the more sectarian features of Samaritanism, such as the insistence on Gerizim as Israel's true central sanctuary). John the Baptist discharged part of his baptismal ministry in Samaritan territory, 'at Aenon near Salim' (John iii. 23)⁴; Jesus, not long afterwards, spent two very fruitful days in the same area (John iv. 35-43)⁵; Philip the Hellenist, a few

¹ Cf. my previous papers in FAITH AND THOUGHT: 'Qumran and the New Testament' (90, no. 2, Autumn 1958, 92 ff.), 'Qumran and the Old Testament' (91, no. 1, Summer 1959, 9 ff.), 'The Gospels and some Recent Discoveries' (92, no. 3, Summer 1962, 149 ff., esp. 160 ff.). ² *Hist. Nat.* v. 17. 4.

³ *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London, 1961), pp. 15 ff. *et passim*.

⁴ Cf. W. F. Albright, 'Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John', in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 153 ff.; *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Pelican Books, 1960), pp. 247 f.

⁵ Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, pp. 61 ff.

years later, conducted a very successful evangelistic campaign among the Samaritans, an unintended by-product of which was the emergence of a remarkable brand of *Christian* nonconformity (Acts viii. 5-25).¹ In the light of all this we may understand better why some of our Lord's hearers in the temple court at Jerusalem, according to John viii. 48, charged Him with being a Samaritan. The word was not a mere term of abuse; it had a theological significance. Although He was as far from being a Samaritan in theology as He was by descent, there was something in His teaching which reminded them of the Samaritan way of putting things.²

Attempts, on the other hand, to associate Jesus closely with the Zealots cannot be called successful.³ For one thing, they involve an excessively sceptical attitude to the gospel tradition, as though the apologetic motives of the Evangelists and their predecessors had distorted the original pattern of His words and deeds almost beyond recognition. Only here and there, it must be concluded, have a few hints of the real state of affairs been allowed inadvertently to be preserved; for the rest, the original picture has been painted over with a new picture of Jesus as one who taught His followers to take the opposite line to the Zealots, to offer no resistance to evil, to turn the other cheek, to volunteer to go a second mile when their services had been conscripted by the military for one mile, to pay Caesar the tribute he demanded (the chief offence of all in the Zealots' eyes). Because the land, and especially the capital, disregarded the way of peace which He showed, and preferred the way of rebellion against the occupying power, destruction would fall on the nation as surely as it fell on the rioting Galileans who were cut down by Pilate's troops in the temple

¹ Cf. A. A. T. Ehrhardt, 'Christianity before the Apostles' Creed', *Harvard Theological Review*, 55 (1962), pp. 73 ff., esp. pp. 83 ff., now reprinted in *The Framework of the NT Stories* (Manchester, 1964), pp. 151 ff., esp. pp. 161 ff.

² Cf. J. Bowman, 'Samaritan Studies', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 40 (1957-58), pp. 298 ff.; 'The Importance of Samaritan Researches', *Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society*, 1 (1958-59), pp. 43 ff., and, most recently, John Macdonald's great work *The Theology of the Samaritans* (London, 1964).

³ Cf. S. G. F. Brandon, 'Jesus and the Zealots', *Annual of the Leeds University Oriental Society*, 2 (1959-61), pp. 11 ff. Professor Brandon is a friend and colleague to whose work I cannot refer without great respect; in spite of (or more probably because of) my inability to see eye to eye with him on a number of questions in New Testament study, I have learned more from him than from many with whom I find myself in much closer agreement.

court.¹ That this picture should be a fabricated substitution for the original picture of a Zealot sympathiser is as probable as that today an attempt should be made, with any hope of success, to persuade us that Michael Collins and other leaders of the Irish liberation struggle between 1916 and 1922 were pacifists who inculcated in their followers an attitude of sweetness and light towards the 'Saxon foe'.

The upshot of such arguments must be that the Evangelists were thoroughly tendentious characters, who succeeded quite amazingly in camouflaging the truth, but occasionally and by accident let the cat out of the bag. This is no way in which to treat ancient authors in any case; initially, at least, they should be dealt with as honest witnesses if we are to derive the greatest profit from what they have to tell us. But if the only documents which have any claim to be regarded as sources for our Lord's public life are so untrustworthy, it must be recognised that we have nothing of any substance to put in their place), and the portrayal of Jesus as a near-Zealot rests on nothing that can reasonably be called documentary evidence.

That Jesus' death on the cross by the sentence of a Roman court did call for a strong and sustained apologetic is writ large throughout the New Testament. The New Testament apologetic is familiar enough to us, and it certainly was amazingly successful.² Could that not have been because it had the advantage of being a true defence? The idea that Jesus' followers, who drew their inspiration from Him, made such headway in the first century with a message which deviated in essential respects from the teaching of the Master in whose name they spoke and acted, is so antecedently unlikely that it should not be accepted without strong and unambiguous evidence to support it—and such evidence we do not have.

That one of the apostles was a Zealot we know; we also know that one was a tax-collector. Simon Zelotes must have been as much an ex-Zealot as Matthew was an ex-tax-collector if the two could co-exist peacefully in the same company.

The incident of the two swords at the Last Supper³ does not even begin to indicate that the Twelve had some of the qualities of a Zealot band. When one of the disciples a few hours later used one of these swords in his Master's defence, he was ordered immediately to sheathe it. A Zealot band would not have been content with two swords;

¹ Luke xiii. 1 ff.

² Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Apostolic Defence of the Gospel* (London, 1959).

³ Luke xxii. 35 ff.

R. Eisler's interpretation, according to which each of them had two swords concealed in his garments, like the *sicarii*,¹ reads into the text what is not there. If a parallel in contemporary life is sought, we have it in Josephus's statement about the Essenes (to which Eisler makes reference in the same place), that since they can always rely on the generous hospitality of fellow-Essenes wherever they go²; 'they do not carry anything with them when they go on a journey, except that they take arms on account of robbers'.³ But no interpretation of this incident in Luke's narrative is adequate which fails to reckon seriously with Jesus' quotation of Isaiah liii. 12 ('he was numbered with the transgressors') and with the sorrowful irony with which he puts an end to the conversation: 'Enough, enough!' he replied' (Luke xxii. 38, N.E.B.).⁴

The cleansing of the temple, which has also been appealed to in this connection, was not a Zealot action. It was not undertaken against the Romans, and in so far as it was a protest against the chief priests, it was not a protest against them for collaborating with the Romans, but for permitting a misuse of the temple precincts. This action was completely in the prophetic tradition, except that where Jeremiah's protest was delivered by word of mouth 'in the gate of the LORD's house' (Jer. vii. 2), Jesus expressed His protest by deed as well as by word. It was not by accident that, as Matthew tells us, some of His contemporaries called Him Jeremiah.⁵ A further reason for comparing Him to Jeremiah was that He urged His hearers to show the same submissive attitude to the Romans as Jeremiah urged upon his fellow-Jerusalemites with regard to the Babylonians.

It is clear that Jesus did have the opportunity, had He so wished, to put Himself at the head of a strong insurgent force. T. W. Manson's interpretation of His compassion because the multitude in the wilderness were 'like sheep without a shepherd'⁶ (Mark vi. 34) is probably correct: He saw them as an army without a captain, and He knew that if they found the wrong kind of captain they could be led to disaster.

¹ *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London, 1931), pp. 369 f.

² Cf. Matt. x. 11: 'And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart.'

³ *Jewish War*, ii. 125.

⁴ Jesus' reply (Gk. *hikanon estin*) is translated 'Well, well,' by T. W. Manson in *Ethics and the Gospel* (London, 1960), p. 90.

⁵ Matt. xvi. 14.

⁶ T. W. Manson, *The Servant-Messiah* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 70 f.

And the kind of captain they would have liked to find is shown by the Johannine narrative of the feeding of the multitude; for, after Jesus had fed them in the wilderness, they tried to compel Him to be their king.¹ He would not be the kind of king they wanted, and they refused to have the only kind of king He was prepared to be; therefore, as John says, many of His followers left Him from then on. Had He been a near-Zealot, albeit an unsuccessful one, His reputation in Jewish tradition would have been different from what it became.

Even before this incident, we can well believe that His closest disciples, in their rather unintelligent zeal, had gone beyond the terms of their Master's commission when He sent them two by two throughout Galilee, and had compromised Him in that part of Herod Antipas's tetrarchy to a point where He found it wise to cross the lake with them until Antipas's interest in Him had cooled off somewhat.²

The plain and consistent testimony of the Gospels is that Jesus regarded the policy of the Zealots and those who shared their general attitude as tragically mistaken, and bound to involve them and their fellow-Jews in ruin. Their ideals were noble; their chosen way of realising them was disastrous. The spirit that hailed Barabbas as a popular hero was the spirit that would one day lay Jerusalem level with the ground.³

IV. *Jesus' Message of the Kingdom*

What, then, was Jesus' message of the kingdom?

He proclaimed it as a new order in which God's rule was to be established in the hearts of men and in the world of mankind. He did not proclaim it as something to be set up beyond space or time, but as something to be realised here on earth, wherever men and women yield ready and glad obedience to God, that His will may be accomplished in and through their lives.⁴ He proclaimed this message not only in His teaching but in all the activities of His ministry, in His own attitude

¹ John vi. 14. Cf. H. W. Montefiore, 'Revolt in the Desert?', *New Testament Studies*, 8 (1961-62), pp. 135 ff.

² Montefiore (ibid. p. 140) suggests the further possibility that 'the death of John the Baptist was the occasion for immediate public disturbances and an abortive Messianic uprising'.

³ Cf. Luke xix. 41-44; xxiii. 28-31.

⁴ A talk by Professor Jeremias on the B.B.C. Third Programme on 14 February, 1962, showed how the main themes of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God are summed up in the Lord's Prayer.

to God and men, and supremely in His acceptance of suffering and death so that His Father's will might be fully done. As a sequel to His suffering and death, indeed, the kingdom of God, already in one sense present in His ministry,¹ would come 'with power' (Mark ix. 1).² Not the way of violence but the way of love would unleash the powers of the coming age on earth: this is emphasised throughout the ministry of Jesus, spoken and acted alike. And the passion and triumph of the Son of Man—that is to say, His triumph through passion—is all of a piece with the preceding ministry; it crowns His historic mission; it reveals and liberates the kingdom of God to make its victorious way in the world. Since the kingdom of God is received where His will is obeyed, nowhere is it more effectively manifested than in Him who said 'Nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt'—and acted accordingly. In Jesus, to use Origen's³ great word, we hail the *autobasileia*, the kingdom in person.

In the vision of Daniel vii, which lies behind so much of our Lord's language about the kingdom, the coming kingdom is received by 'one like a son of man', who is closely associated, if not absolutely identified, with 'the saints of the Most High' (Dan. viii. 13 f., 18). Indeed, when Jesus proclaimed that 'the appointed time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near' (Mark i. 15), we may catch an echo of Dan. vii. 22: 'the appointed time came and the saints received the kingdom.'⁴ T. W. Manson argued that in the earlier phase of Jesus' ministry He maintained the corporate interpretation of the 'one like a son of man', and called His disciples that they, with Him, might be fellow-members of the Son of Man.⁵ Whether this was precisely His intention at that stage is a debatable question. What is not debatable is that, in the event, He fulfilled single-handed all that was written concerning the Son of Man, 'that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt' (Mark ix. 12).

When we study those passages in which Jesus speaks of the predestined sufferings of the Son of Man, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion

¹ Cf. Matt. xii. 28||Luke xi. 20: 'the kingdom of God has come upon (ἐφθασεν) you.'

² Cf. the reference to Jesus' impending 'baptism' which must be undergone before the present limitations of the ministry are removed (Luke xii. 50; cf. also Mark x. 38; John xii. 20-33).

³ Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, xiv. 7.

⁴ Cf. C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London, 1952), pp. 68 f.

⁵ *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 211 ff.

that He accepted and accomplished His mission as the Son of Man in terms of the Servant of the Lord of Isaiah xlii-liii.¹ This Servant, in his humble and faithful obedience to God, endures undeserved suffering and death at the hands of men, but his suffering and death are the very means by which he brings his mission to a triumphant conclusion. For in that suffering and death he presents his life to God as a sin-offering on behalf of others, and by so bearing their sins he wins for 'the many' a favourable verdict from God and a righteous status before Him.² Thus, while Daniel portrays the 'one like a son of man' as receiving authority to execute judgment on men, Jesus declares that 'the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' (Mark ii. 10).³

As the Representative Man Jesus thus accomplishes for others what they were unable to accomplish for themselves, taking His people's sins in death upon Himself and by that very act taking them away. But as the Representative Man He is also, through His passion, the founder of a new humanity, the members of which bear the marks of the Son of Man, drinking his cup and sharing his baptism,⁴ giving service rather than receiving it, forgiving and not condemning, living for others and not for self.

That the bringing into being of such a new humanity was part of the historic mission of Jesus is clear enough in the New Testament record. The very number of the Twelve implies that they were envisaged as the nucleus of the new people of God.⁵ They, together with Jesus' other disciples who continued with Him in His trials, were the 'little flock' to which the Father was pleased to give the kingdom (Luke xii. 32). After His death and resurrection their numbers rapidly

¹ H. Zahrnt (*The Historical Jesus*, p. 80) finds that this synthesis is characteristic of English scholars, and that its outlines have been drawn from the work of Rudolf Otto—especially his *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (Eng. tr., London, 1938). But the synthesis was developed independently by English scholars (cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, p. 231) and is not without its defenders among German scholars (cf. W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, *The Servant of God* [Eng. tr., London, 1957]); on the other hand, some English scholars have questioned it (cf. C. K. Barrett, 'The Background of Mark 10: 45', in *New Testament Essays*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins [Manchester, 1959], pp. 1 ff.; M. D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* [London, 1959]). It may well be that the synthesis had been made already, before the Gospel age, by the Qumran community, who interpreted both figures corporately in terms of their own calling.

² Isa. liii. 12.

³ Cf. John iii. 17; xii. 47.

⁴ Mark x. 38; cf. such Pauline expressions as 'baptised into his death' (Rom. vi. 3), 'that I may . . . share his sufferings' (Phil. iii. 10).

⁵ Cf. Matt. xix. 28; Luke xxii. 30.

increased, to the point where they could no longer be described as a *little* flock. But while their numbers might increase, their character must not change, if they were to remain true to their commission to carry forward the ministry of the Servant-Messiah, with the assurance of His abiding presence and power made real to them by His Spirit. They recognised this themselves. The Servant of the Lord was to be 'a light to the nations' as well as the restorer of Israel (Isa. xlix. 6). When Paul and Barnabas at Pisidian Antioch announced their intention of concentrating on the evangelisation of Gentiles, they claimed to be fulfilling the servant's rôle (Acts xiii. 47): 'For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth".'

The historic mission of Jesus is thus the first phase of the mission of the church; or, to put it more biblically, the mission of the church is the continuation of the historic mission of Jesus.