

In considering the Christian influences upon Paul in the area of Mission we must start by attempting to discover the approach of Jesus to the Gentiles. But we may not assume that, even if we can reach some conclusions about the mission of Jesus, this will necessarily have affected Paul's thinking or that he would even have known about it. So first, we ask the question "How much did Paul know of Jesus?"¹

JESUS AND PAUL:

The case that Paul is hardly if at all dependent for his thinking on the historical Jesus has been clearly stated by Rudolf Bultmann, although he is far from the only proponent of this position. To quote him "Paul is not directly influenced by the historical Jesus at all. He was neither a disciple of Jesus nor, in Jesus own lifetime, one of his adversaries."² There are many supporters of this view.³ Emil Brunner puts the point at its most extreme when he says, "Jesus of Nazareth the rabbi, the so-called historical Jesus, was an object of no interest for the early Christians."⁴

The major reason for such an assertion is the seeming discontinuity between the teaching of Jesus and that of the Pauline corpus. H.J. Schoeps⁵ comments that the earthly life of Jesus falls strikingly into the background in the letters of Paul. Any allusions which are to be found to Jesus do not form a central place in Paul's teaching. They do no more than suggest that for Paul Jesus was no mythical figure but rather historical fact. Logia of Jesus are very seldom expressly cited.

An entirely opposite view would suggest that Paul was acquainted with, and had possibly met with, Jesus during his earthly ministry and that this ministry had important influence upon him. J. Weiss,⁶ largely as a result of his exegesis of II Cor. 5,16, and of his conviction that Paul could not have recognised Jesus on the Damascus Road if he had not seen him in the flesh, takes this position.⁷ We have already commented on the view of Van Unnik⁸ that Paul was brought up in Jerusalem, and spent most of his

life there. If this is the case it lends at least plausibility to the view.

Those who wish to draw out the continuity between Paul and Jesus insist that Paul must have known something about the person whose disciples he persecuted. Whether Paul actually met with or spoke with the historical Jesus he did spend time with those who had been his close followers and despite his assertion in Gal. 1, 11 & 12, he must have heard from them the traditions and teachings of Jesus. Regarding the lack of reference to the teaching of Jesus in Paul's letters it must be remembered that, for the most part, these are particular works of instruction or exhortation written for particular people and so, while they are all that we possess from which to reproduce the mind of Paul, we may not use an "argumentum ex silentio" from them to draw conclusions about Paul's missionary preaching, which would have been largely oral.

While noting, therefore that the line of transmission of the teaching of Jesus to Paul is far from clear, and that there are those who have felt it to be non-existent, we nevertheless believe that we are justified in considering the approach of Jesus to the Gentiles as a possible motivation for Paul's later mission.

JESUS AND THE CHURCH:

Before we can consider the approach of Jesus to the Gentiles we must look briefly at the more basic question of whether he ever intended to found a Church at all. In this matter T.W. Manson has no doubts: "...the creation of the corporate body called the Church.. was not an idea that first occurred to the disciples after the Resurrection.." he claims.¹¹ Rather he sees it as an essential part of the intention of Jesus from the first days of the Galilean ministry. Manson lays great stress on the saying of Jesus "I will make you fishers of men" (Lk. 5,10), which he takes as authentic.

However there are those who think that, although Jesus was at the head of an important movement in the life of Israel he did not intend to found a new community. One such suggestion was made by Reimarus, who sees any Mission

of Jesus in political terms. Reimarus believed that, since the Kingdom of Heaven¹² was interpreted by those of Jesus' time in political terms, Jesus Himself would have expected them thus to interpret his Messiahship. He would have known that he would be awakening their worldly hopes by such a plain announcement of his Messiahship, and so this must have been his purpose in so doing. In sending out his disciples on mission he once again would seem to be accepting their worldly view of the kingdom without radically re-interpreting it.

It should further be noted that, while reference to "kingdom" is common in the gospels there are but two references to "church" (Mt.16, 18: Mt.18,17) and each of them is questionable. Such an observation lead Loisy to comment "Jesus foretold the kingdom and it was the Church that came."¹³ C.K. Barrett notes that the quantity of expectant prediction of the life of the Church that is put into the mouth of Jesus after the time of his death and resurrection is relatively small. He finds that the Gentile mission is hinted at, but only in occasional verses. There is complete silence concerning the structure and form of the Church. Barrett in fact suggests that references to the Gentile Mission and to the Holy Spirit do not belong to the earliest strata of tradition. It was rather that the evangelists, in editing the material, needed to make it square with what they knew to be the fact of an interval between the resurrection and the Parousia.¹⁴

It is hard to deny that Jesus share the view widely held in the early Church that the Kingdom would not be long delayed. (cf. Mk. 9,1).¹⁵ Whatever about His plans for a Church such as we find developing in some of the later letters in the N.T., we do see an attitude to Gentiles developing in his preaching of the Kingdom and his eschatological expectations. Insofar as this attitude was important to the early Church and would have been mediated through them, if not directly, to Paul we must now consider it.

JESUS AND THE GENTILES:

As has been already noted the characteristic proclamation of Jesus was of the coming Kingdom of God,¹⁶ but there is

considerable discussion concerning the place which he saw would be occupied by the Gentiles in this coming Kingdom. Did Jesus go on Mission to the Gentiles? Did he confine his activity to Judaism? Did he intend his followers to undertake a Gentile Mission after his death?

There is general agreement that Jesus did not himself undertake a planned Mission to the Gentiles. Friederich Spitta¹⁷ pointed out that in the mixed population of Galilee Jesus would have been in contact with Gentiles from the beginning, and suggests that such a mission would also have been in his mind from the beginning. While Spitta is right in drawing attention to the unreserved attitude of Jesus to the Gentiles this does not in itself give sufficient grounds for postulating a mission to them. On the other hand Adolf von Harnack¹⁸ suggested that the Gentiles were of no concern to Jesus. His appeal was rather to the orthodox of Judaism, but such was his religion and spirit that it very naturally spread beyond Judaism after his death. Although this interpretation places most of Jesus activity where it rightly belongs, among the "lost sheep of the house of Israel"¹⁹ it pays little attention to the eschatological hope of Jesus or to the positive references to the Gentiles which his words contained. J. Jeremias very clearly sets out the elements of the problem with both its negative and positive sides.²⁰ As we have already noted there was considerable mission taking place in Judaism in the first century A.D. The only words of Jesus which we possess in relation to this mission are words of condemnation (Matt.23,15).²¹ If Jesus had intended to undertake a Gentile Mission or had been involved in one we would surely have further, and more positive, references to the work already being undertaken by Judaism.

The account of the Mission of the twelve (Matt 10, 1ff) provides a further negative indication. vv.5 & 6 are specific, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The question arises as to whether these are original sayings or later distortions. What are

we to make of passages such as Mk. 13, 10; 14, 9 which seem to pre-suppose that Jesus had instructed his disciples to preach to the Gentiles? Jeremias suggests that in each case ²² refers, not to "Gospel", but to the final triumph of God which will be proclaimed to the nations by God's angel. Thus these passages refer, not to a mission by the Disciples but to the final fulfilment and the last judgement.²² G.D. Kilpatrick also arrives at the conclusion that these verses do not refer to a Gentile Mission, although in his view Mk. 13, 10 must be re-punctuated to arrive at its true reading which suggests a preaching to the Jews both in Palestine and the Diaspora.²³ Other references in the pre-resurrection sayings of Jesus which might refer to a Gentile mission (Mt.5,13; 10,18; 21, 43; 22 9f) are missing in the Markan and Lucan parallels or are taken by Matthew as references to Gentiles where the original reference is to publicans and sinners.²⁴ Jeremias sees the two Lucan references to Gentile mission (Lk.10,1; 14,23) as secondary doublets. His strongest reason, however, for regarding Matt.10,5 & 6 as the position which Jesus took with regard to a Gentile Mission by his disciples was that this would in fact seem to be the position which the early Church initially held.²⁵

In Matt. 15,24 we have the words of an isolated logion which, though absent from the Markan parallel, are taken by Jeremias to go back to an early Aramaic tradition.

²⁶ Where it may be suggested that this saying reflected an early Palestinian community who were opposed to the Gentile mission²⁷ Jeremias replies that we have no warrant for suggesting that an Aramaic community invented new sayings of Jesus, whereas it may have re-interpreted them. Nor can we assign this saying to a Palestinian source without also assigning the stories of Mk.7,24ff and Matt.8,5ff to the same source. Yet the latter stories, while rejecting Gentile mission, have nevertheless a very open attitude to the Gentiles.

When we consider the contacts of Jesus with Gentiles as mentioned above we note that in both cases they are

healings at a distance, and in both cases there seems to be evident reluctance on the part of Jesus before a confession of faith invites from him a healing sign. Jeremias considers that these stories re-inforce the opinion that Jesus confined his activity to Israel.²⁸

It has been pointed out that the ministry of Jesus is divided into two halves and that, faced with rejection among his own people and their continued demand for a materialist Messiah together with the failure of his mission to produce the last days, Jesus turned to the Gentiles. Vincent Taylor comments that Mk. 7,24- 8,26 was planned to meet the needs of Gentile readers. "The Evangelist wanted to show that the interest of Jesus was not confined to Jews but extended to non-Jewish people beyond the confines of Galilee...Nevertheless the limitations imposed by the tradition are not less apparent. No preaching or teaching to Gentiles is recorded because the tradition had no knowledge of it...the section is a defeated attempt to represent what would have been welcomed if the tradition could have supplied the evidence."²⁹ Not only in this section but in the accounts of the other synoptic writers as well the wish to record Jesus as dealing with the Gentiles is not borne out by the facts which they produce. Jeremias further suggests that topographical considerations also prove that we have no evidence that Jesus ever went beyond the boundaries of the Jewish population.³⁰

Turning to what he terms "Three important positive conclusions" Jeremias proceeds to demonstrate that the ministry of Jesus was not wholly confined to Judaism. In the first instance, while not being ignorant of the place of Israel in the divine scheme of redemption³¹ Jesus removed the idea of vengeance from the eschatological expectation. This is clear from the welcome which he offered to Samaritans, and the manner in which they were included in his healings, the sign of God's saving activity.³² Such a welcome was in marked contrast to the burning enmity with which Jews regarded this mixed race, indeed such was the hostility that the Jews regarded

them as Gentiles - . Equally noticeable is the manner in which Jesus removed the thought of vengeance on the Gentiles from statements of God's redemptive purpose. Here we may cite the sermon in Nazareth recorded in Luke 4,16ff. Jesus, quoting from Isaiah 61, omits the concluding reference to "the day of vengeance of our God"(V.2), much to the offence of those in the Synagogue.³³

Not only are references to vengeance omitted from Jesus' preaching but the Gentiles are promised a share in redemption. In Judaism the fact that one was considered a "son of Abraham" was considered vital,³⁴ but Jesus termed the publicans "sons of Abraham",³⁵ where contemporary Judaism classified them alongside the Gentiles. Furthermore, although Jesus recognised the distinction between God's people and the Gentiles, the time would come when that distinction would end. The dead heathen would rise again, not only those such as the Queen of Sheba, who honoured God, and the Ninevites, who repented, but also the residents of Tyre and Sidon, and even exemplary sinners like the Sodomites, whose resurrection contemporary thought generally denied.³⁶ Not only would they rise, but they would stand in judgement over against this generation. Matt. 8, 11 & 12, offered to Judaism the shocking thought that in the last days their place would be taken at the heavenly banquet by the Gentiles.

Jeremias finally points out that the redemptive activity and Lordship of Christ includes the Gentiles. This springs from his own consciousness of his authority, seen both through the title "Son of Man",³⁷ and the entrance into Jerusalem where, by deliberately fulfilling the saying of Zechariah 9.9, Jesus presents himself as the coming King who will be prince of Peace for all nations.³⁸ Jesus also thought of himself as the servant of Yahweh, and as such the one who would be a light to the nations, would sprinkle many nations and would bear the sins of many.³⁹

Thus we find ourselves in a contradiction of negative and positive attitudes. Different approaches have been

suggested. T.W. Manson, who as we have already noted, believes that Jesus was concerned to found a Church, suggests that the disciples' ministry was confined to Israel because that was where the disciples were. While noting that Gentiles were unable to enter the community during the ministry of Jesus Manson suggests that it was his ultimate hope that they would. The real constructive work of the ministry had to be done within Israel by building up a body of men and women who were set free from chauvinistic nationalism and who had learned from apprenticeship to Jesus how to accept the rule of God for themselves and how to extend it to their neighbours at home and abroad by serving them in love. Manson suggests that Jesus saw the immediate task as that of creating such a community within Israel in the faith that it would transform the life of his own people and that a transformed Israel would transform the world.⁴⁰

But this approach seems to take little account of the eschatological element in the teaching of Jesus. Nowhere in the gospels do we find the aims of Jesus stated in this way.

G.D. Kilpatrick, as a result of his studies, submits that, at any rate in Mark, "there is no preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles in this world and there is no interest in their fate in the world to come."⁴¹ But this conclusion, although warranted by some of Kilpatrick's findings, especially in regard to Mk. 13, 9-11, is far too generalised and seems to miss many of the nuances in the teaching of Jesus about himself (cf. 10, 45, 11, 1-10).

Jeremias, having posed the dilemma of a contradictory approach, offers a solution based on the conception of the pilgrimage of the Gentiles to God in Mt. 8,11. Such a pilgrimage takes place in the hour of final judgement.⁴² Jeremias then examines the picture of this pilgrimage further by outlining what Jesus would have read about it in his Bible. He discovers that it involves the Epiphany of God, in which the glory of God will be revealed to all the world.⁴³ Further this epiphany is accompanied by the

call of God to the nations.⁴⁴ The nations respond to that call by undertaking the journey to the mountain of the Lord, bearing gifts.⁴⁵ The end of such a journey is the worship which they offer in Jerusalem, which is now a world-sanctuary.⁴⁶ The fact that the Gentiles truly belong as the people of God in this last hour will be shown by their participation in the Messianic Banquet.⁴⁷

Some references to the pilgrimage of the nations are to be found in the extra-canonical literature,⁴⁸ but they are rare in the rabbinic literature since the exclusive nationalistic approach towards the Gentiles became dominant after the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70.

Having discovered this as a fundamental part of Jesus' thinking Jeremias then notes that similar references to the pilgrimage of the nations may be found throughout his teaching. Any reference to Messianic banquets are to be seen in this light, as are references to a scattered, shepherdless flock and references to the temple of the new age.⁴⁹

Jeremias thus claims that Jesus expected the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God as God's eschatological act of power. Thus in his ministry Jesus was concerned with two separate events. First there is the call to Israel and subsequently the redemptive call to the Gentiles. Jesus drew a clear distinction between the two and his attitude may be reflected in that of the early Church which was, according to Jeremias, that the promise of salvation given to "the fathers" must first be fulfilled.⁵⁰ Coupled with this is the insistence, most clearly developed in the Gospel of John, that the Gentiles must follow the way of the Cross. "Jesus realised that it was his earthly task to prepare for the hour of the revelation of the Kingdom by fulfilling these two necessary conditions."⁵¹

F. Hahn, while finding much of Jeremias' outline helpful, criticises it on a number of grounds. He suggests that

it is insufficient simply to suggest that the calling in of the Gentiles at the last time is the work of God. If this is what the early Church received from Jesus it is hard to see how they became involved in Mission to the Gentiles at all. Hahn lays greater weight than does Jeremias on the fact that Gentiles did approach Jesus, and did receive healing from him on the basis of their faith. Since such healing is the sign of the breaking in of the last days then Jesus is already understood to be involving the Gentiles in a share of this salvation. "Jesus' message and works in Israel became a witness among the Gentiles, and still more: as the eschatological event already began to be realised, salvation came within the direct reach of the Gentiles."⁵² Hahn finds here explanation of the varied development of the early Church, both with its narrowing, particularist attitude and also its widening out to Gentiles.

Although Hahn's comments seem to take seriously the impact of the healing miracles for Gentiles, where Jeremias is inclined to underestimate their significance, one is left wondering that we are not told of more activity of Jesus among the Gentiles if the eschatological event is indeed beginning to be realised before the event of the cross. The combination of the death and resurrection of Jesus together with the new sense of the Spirit, the events of Peter's vision concerning Cornelius and the commission to Paul on the Damascus Road surely offered the Church sufficient reason to engage in mission to the Gentiles if they wished it, without supposing that Jesus himself was deeply involved in this work.

Notes:

1. The manner in which the question may be put is itself complicated. J.W. Fraser, in "Paul's Knowledge of Jesus (N.T.S.17 pp.293-313) points out that "know" can mean "know by sight", "have a slight contact with", "Have close relations with", "know about others", and finally, "form a judgement about" or "understand". The question here is put in its most general terms.

2. "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul" (1929) in "Faith and Understanding" (E.T.1969) pp 229-246. Bultmann comments that Paul had possibly never been to Jerusalem before his conversion and that stories such as the stoning of Stephen and the tradition that he was a pupil of Gamaliel are legendary. But the main base of Bultmann's case is that Paul is writing in a new situation in which the Messiah has come. It is the preaching of Christ rather than the personality of the historical Jesus that brings salvation. (p.245)
3. In his discussion on this debate G.N. Stanton ("Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching".Cambridge 1974) notes W. Schmithals, E. Haenchen and S. Schulz as having a similar approach.
4. "The Word and the World" (E.T.1931), pp.87ff.
5. "Paul" (E.T.1961) pp.55-57.
6. "Paul cannot imagine the exalted one, on whom his faith is fixed so ardently and gratefully, without thinking at the same time of the love which he showed us in His earthly life". Paulus und Jesus (1905) p.15.
7. Other supporters include J.H. Moulton, Bousset, Lietzmann, Klausner.
8. Op.cit.,p.54.
9. H.J. Schoeps (op.cit. pp.55-57) takes the opposite position and quotes E. Schweitzer: "...if we had to rely on Paul we would not know that Jesus taught in parables, had delivered a Sermon on the Mount and had taught the disciples the "Our Father"."
10. Inasmuch as they assume that Paul had no interest in it.
11. "Jesus and the Non-Jews" (1955) p.6ff.
12. "Fragments" 1971, p.137. S.G.F. Brandon (Jesus and the Zealots 1967) offers a similar political interpretation of Jesus. J. Riches (Jesus and the transformation of Judaism: 1980) tries to answer Reimarus' question concerning Jesus' purpose by using the picture of a prophet.
13. "The Gospel and the Church" (1903) p.166, quoted by C.K. Barrett in "Jesus and the Gospel Tradition"(1967) p.68.

14. Op.cit., p.71ff
15. A verse that has provoked much discussion. A traditional interpretation found in the writings of some of the Church Fathers (e.g. Chrusostom), and followed by Cranfield (St. Mark pp.285-289) is that this verse refers, at least in part, to the transfiguration. But this approach hardly explains and is weakened if we accept that the original setting of the saying is not here. W.G. Kummel (Promise and Fulfilment) in discussing the verse suggests that Jesus expected the end within fifty or sixty years. I am to some extent attracted to the suggestion of V. Taylor (St. Mark 1952 pp.385-386) which seeks to identify the coming of the Kingdom with "a visible manifestation of the rule of God displayed in the life of an elect Community." This interpretation leads to the thought that the Church was Jesus' intention.
16. e.g. Mk.1.15; 4.26; 4.30; 9.1; 9.47; 12.34:
17. "Jesus und die Heidenmission" p72ff., 109ff. (Quoted by F. Hahn, op.cit.,p.27).
18. "Mission und Ausbreitung I" pp.39ff.
19. Matt.10.6.
20. Professor Jeremias' work, which offers a most helpful basis for the whole discussion, appeared first in English as "The Gentile World in the Thought of Jesus" (S.N.T.S.Bulletin III 1952 pp.28ff) and subsequently in expanded form as "Jesu Verheissung fur die Volker" (E.T. "Jesus' Promise to the Nations" 1958)
21. J. Munck, ("Paul and the Salvation of Mankind" 1959), argues that Matt.23.15 is not evidence of vigorous Jewish missionary activity. He suggests that means a Jewish adherent to the Pharisaic party or that the verse is a later insertion, written with direct reference to a promise made by Epiphanes, son of Antiochus IV of Commagene, in 43 A.D., that he would adopt the Jewish religion for purposes of marriage (pp.266-267). But Munck's suggestions seem rather precarious here. It is an unsound critical method to attempt to find reason for such a saying in a later historical event, and we do not have

- evidence that proselutos could be applied to those who were already, in fact, Jews. Jeremias (op.cit. p.17f) sees an Aramaic structure behind the verse.
22. The hōpou of Mark 14.3 should be understood in a temporal sense "on the one occasion when" (So Jeremias; an eschatological flavour is denied to euangelion by Cranfield op.cit.418) and Taylor (op.cit. 533f)
 23. "The Gentile Mission in Mark and Mark 13.9-11" (From Studies in the Gospels, ed. D.E.H. Nineham (London 1955.) On the position of the phrase "to the Gentiles", See Kilpatrick (op.cit)
 24. Jeremias, op.cit 24 But, surely, rather than being Matthaean additions, these verses refer not to a Gentile mission but rather to the purpose of God in the last days.
 25. on the timing of the Gentiles mission of Jeremias, op.cit.p25
 26. On three grounds (i) that ἀποστολὴν parallels (ii) that the passive ἀπέστειλε is a circumlocution for the divine activity; (iii) that the phrase "send to" (ἀποστέλλω εἰς) is not classical Greek but occurs in the LXX
 27. As suggested by Bultmann (Syn. Tradition, Göttingen 1931); cf also F.W. Beare, "The Mission of the Disciples in Matt.10" (JBL 1970)
 28. op.cit. 291ff
 29. op.cit. 633
 30. These conclusions are reached through quoting the work of Albrecht Alt and G. Dalman
 31. Mk.12.1ff; Mt 10.6; 15.24; Lk 13.16; 19.9 - all offer a characterisation of the Jewish privilege, while the Gentile disadvantage may be noted, for instance, in Mt.5.47; 6.32
 32. Lk 17.11-19; 10,25-37
 33. In Lk 4.22 the αὐτο is a dative of advantage and the meaning is "take offence at.
 34. Cf Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus
 35. Lk 19.9
 36. Mt 11.22;12.41f;10.15
 37. on the genuineness of Mark 10.45 Cf Taylor(op.cit) p445) The literature on the phrase "Son of Man" is immense and is impossible to deal with here.
 38. This is an indirect proclamation; Rabbinic literature interprets Zech.9.9 in a Messianic sense (cf Jeremias op.cit.p52)
 39. In spite of Jeremias (TDNT, V, p712f) not all accept that Jesus made use of the Servant concept eg C.K. Barrett and Morna Hooker
 40. Cf the approach of Riches (op.cit. p184)
 41. op.cit. p157
 42. For the thought of the journey of the nations see Isa 2.2; Micha 4.1
 43. Zech.2.13; Is.40.5; 51.4;60.3
 44. Isa.45.20,22; Ps.96.3
 45. Isa 2.3;19.23;18.7;60; Hag.2.7; Ps 68.30,32
 46. Isa 45.23; 66.18; Ps. 96.8.
 47. Isa 25.6-8
 48. eg Tobit 13.13; Ps Sol 17.31; IV Ezra 13.13
 49. Mt.25.21f; Lk 22.16; Jn 10.16; Mk 14.58;12.10
On the phrase "to all the Gentiles" as original cf Taylor op.cit.463
 50. Rom 15.8;Acts 3.25 51. op.cit. p73
 52. op.cit. p39