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Form-Criticism and Faith

H. L. MACNEILL.

What estimate should we make of Form-Criticism of the Gospels, and what effect should such estimate have upon our Faith?

And first, with regard to the proper estimate of this movement. In one respect, Form-Criticism is not as entirely new as it seems. It is, as we have said, a peering further into the Oral Period in order to find out by a study of the composition of the Gospels themselves just what were the motives and methods of those who first began the formation and use of items concerning Jesus after his actual life and ministry. But the finding of this advance into the earlier Oral Period only brings into relief the principle of the Social School of Chicago, viz. that in this Oral Period also, the first formation of pericopae, i.e., separate short stories about the life and ministry of Jesus, was a part of the preaching and missionary propaganda of the developing Church, and so reflects and expresses the needs and interests, the thought and feeling of the Church, rather than the mind of Jesus himself. How much this is so, it is as yet exceedingly difficult to say. Form-Criticism is still in its infancy.

Naturally the Germans, who opened up this new line, consider its findings quite important. They hold that it confirms the feeling that it will not be possible to write a Biography of Jesus. These short stories, these separate thought-sections about Jesus, were never meant to form portions of a Biography, they were formed and used to make Christian preaching effective—a very different thing.

When these separate thought-sections first began to be assembled it was not done by apostles or direct followers of Jesus, but by others, e.g. Mark, the author of Matthew, Luke and the author of the Fourth Gospel, (cf. Lu. 1:1-4,) who did not know the original chronological relations even of those stories or portions of stories which were authentic. Moreover, the authors were not thinking of biography and of the chronological relations of their material. The material in the Sermon on the Mount was a compilation, as much of the material in it is found in other and different connections in Luke. And the parables in Mark, Chapter 4, are a compilation. Quite possibly the Temptation story is a compilation. In fact, the conclusion of Form-Criticism is that the style of the stories and their vague, indefinite introductions indicate that Mark and Matthew particularly are compilations of this varied piecemeal material put together according to the framework or structure formed by the purpose and ingenuity of the final writer himself, writing when the historical connections and chronological order, if ever known, had been forgotten. Matthew has his schema in five books. Luke, too, is evidently a late compilation, somewhat different. The elaborate dating of Luke 2: 1-2 and 3: 1-2 is his own, due to his own historical interest, and has occasioned a great deal of discussion and uncertainty.

Not only is there, therefore, no satisfactory ground on which to base anything that can properly be called a Biography, there is further no sufficient ground for estimating the length of Jesus' ministry. It is well known, of course, that the Fourth Gospel seems to suggest a ministry of about three years as there are at least two, possibly three Passovers mentioned, in addition to the last one. The Synoptic Gospels suggest, on the other hand, a ministry of little more than one year. But now we see, partly from literary criticism, partly from historical criticism, but still more from the way in which Form-Criticism claims that the material in our Gospels was assembled, viz. for preaching—we see that any such inferences as to the length of Jesus' ministry are unjustified. In material so gathered and so used, chronological references are quite fortuitous and accidental.

Again, Form-Criticism suggests that it is utterly precarious on the basis of piecemeal material so assembled, to attempt any satisfactory picture of the inner development of Jesus' consciousness and thought. Its stronger advocates, both German and English, further insist that it is well nigh impossible to distinguish strata of material with sufficient clearness and certainty to say what belongs to Jesus and what belongs to the creative consciousness and needs of the developing Christian Church. Thus the whole landscape is befogged. A haze of uncertainty falls over the whole historical situation. Formerly, we had the idea that we must admit this historical uncertainty for the Fourth Gospel, which, whoever its author might be, was an independently creative work by some profound mystical religious genius living at the end of the first, or beginning of the second century A.D. We were told, and we partly believed it, that Ev. 4 was interpretation not history. Now historical and Form-Criticism combine to tell us that the Synoptic Gospels, including Mark itself, are also interpretation rather than history.

To begin with, the final authors of the three Synoptic Gospels, undoubtedly thoroughly representative of their community and their time, moulded their material to suit their own outlook and purpose. Mark, at an earlier period, presents, particularly for the Gentiles, the career and activity of the Son of Man, Messiah, who passed, for the most part incognito, through humiliation, suffering, death and resurrection to the presence of God, and would come again in glory and power to set up the Kingdom of God.

Matthew combines Q with Mark into an anti-Jewish philosophy of History, according to which God sent his beloved Son, the Messiah, to the Jews. Since, however, the Jews, as a people, had now rejected him, the Kingdom would be taken from them and given to the Gentiles.

Luke's interpretation springs from the later period of the Gentiles and gives to Jesus and his Gospel a more universal, humanitarian, historical interpretation.

But all three, says Form-Criticism, are mainly interpretations of Jesus springing from the interests and needs of the time and locality which the authors represent. But, added to that, is the fact that the separate stories, or thought-sections, which took shape during the Oral Period, are themselves also interpretations due to the interests and

needs of preaching. Thus, our Synoptic Gospels are interpretations of interpretations, and cannot fairly be looked upon as authentic objective history.

The strong advocates of Form-Criticism, not only German but English, are inclined to infer from all this that the Jesus of History fades away to a vanishing point. Professor R. H. Lightfoot, in his book "History and Interpretation in the Gospels," the Bampton Lectures for 1934, closes with the following, somewhat enigmatic, words: "It seems then, that the form of the earthly, no less than of the heavenly Christ, is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the Gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice; we trace in them but the outskirts of his ways. Only when we see him hereafter in his fullness shall we know him also as he was on earth. And perhaps the more we ponder the matter, the more clearly we shall understand the reason for it, and therefore shall not wish it otherwise. For probably we are at present as little prepared for the one as for the other." Cf. also p. 220 f.

What then are we to say to these things? What effect will this new turn of historico-social and Form-Criticism have upon our Christian faith? Or rather, perhaps, what effect *should* it have?

We are not yet in a position to give a full or fair appraisal of its worth and proper effects. Many German scholars and some English and American scholars over-estimate Form-Criticism and its adverse results. They tend, too easily and unnecessarily, to take the defeatist attitude in the matter and to think that there is nothing but loose and shifting sand beneath our feet.

The late Professor Burkitt is undoubtedly *partly* right, at least, in his little book, "Jesus Christ, A Historical Outline," in insisting that there are Petrine reminiscences in Mark that are authentic, whatever may be the additions from the creative interests and interpretation of a later time.

One clear instance which would serve as one example to check the all-too-ready inclination on the part of many to think that the real Jesus is virtually lost under the accretions due to the creative interpretation of a later time, may be found in Mt. 5:23-24. Now Matthew's Gospel, it is generally agreed, was written about 85 or 90 A.D., but here we have a passage which must evidently be so interpreted as to be placed during the existence of the Temple, surely before 66 A.D. It is a single and unusual case, of course, and not many cases can be found, perhaps, that are so clear and compelling. But there are many others which, if not so clear and compelling, yet, as Burkitt says, can only most fittingly be interpreted as genuine reminiscences.

Again, Burkitt, in the little book mentioned, admits a larger degree of what I call convincing psychological order than he himself had been wont to see. He claims that there are at least three clear instances of a change of mind and adaptation to circumstances on the part of Jesus, viz. when he finally left Galilee (Mk. 7:24); secondly, when after the confession at Caesarea Philippi, he decided to go to Jerusalem; and thirdly, his attitude to the Cross, after the failure of the cleansing of the Temple.

In this respect Professor Burkitt is quite restrained. There are good evidences for authentic reminiscences in some, at least, of the many other psychological adaptations to circumstances; e.g., from emphasis on healing to emphasis on teaching and preaching, leaving the synagogue and teaching in the open air, rejecting popularity and facing danger.

In the strange northern trip, mainly outside Galilee, I am inclined to place Jesus' reaction to failure in Galilee, viz. his conscious adoption of the sacrificial conception of the Messiah, his new and tragic decision to go to Jerusalem, the change from the more objective and hopeful attitude of the ministry in Galilee and the Sermon on the Mount to the much more sombre, serious and tragic attitude of mind after the confession at Caesarea Philippi. I cannot think that all this is an imaginary psychological order, due to the community or the authors of the Gospel. Undoubtedly, much of the detailed material in all three Gospels is compilation for preaching and paedagogical purposes, but I cannot think this, that I call psychological order, is due wholly to the community or the authors. Finally, it may be said that, making all due allowance for topical and paedagogical compilation in the Gospels, there is assuredly a saving remnant of chronological and historical order that cannot fairly be laid to the construction or outline of the author. The Gospels are surely not altogether such a construction as "Pilgrim's Progress."

But when such checks are put upon the common German estimate of the results of Form-Criticism, it still remains altogether likely that Form-Criticism is destined, sooner or later, to have its effect upon Faith. It means a reduction of the element or amount of the historical in our New Testament. It means lessened confidence in many parts of what we have hitherto considered to be historical. Both the German school and the Chicago school are in line with the recent emphasis upon the social milieu, the present needs and interests of the community concerned. They emphasize the fact that Christianity is a developing social, mental, moral, religious process, a stream of life whose waters are constantly colored and changed by the contributions (or it may be deductions) from the particular time and locality into which it passes. This we can see by a survey of Christian history, but Form-Criticism reminds us that it holds equally within the covers and within the period of the New Testament itself. That is to say, Jesus himself, the real historical Jesus, is not complete Christianity. The Christian movement was, and is, and always will be, a changing, we trust growing and advancing, process. As since, so within the New Testament period, it both fell short of an adequate picture of Jesus, and it added to Jesus.

We can now discern within the New Testament the first brief primitive Jewish-Christian period, Mt. 10:5-23, Ac. Chs. 1-5, when no one thought of taking the Gospel outside Judaea; the somewhat later Hellenist-Jewish period, where the Gospel passed to the Jews of the Diaspora, in such places as Damascus, and also after Stephen, by the Hellenists to Samaria and the north, and ultimately to Antioch, Ac. 6-8; the Hellenist-Gentile period under Paul and others, and finally

the practically exclusively Gentile period when the Jews as a people finally rejected Christianity (Ro. Chs. 9-11 and Ev. 4).

During these periods, the picture of Jesus changed with the changing circumstances. There are various shades of the picture, but mainly two. One Jewish, representing Jesus as Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, and Son of God—the period during which the cross was felt to be a disgrace, a scandal, a stumbling-block; the period when the idea of suffering and death was added to the Messianic conception probably by the term, Son of Man. The second picture of Jesus bears the stamp and color of the Gentile period, when "Christ" becomes merely a proper name, when the Christian confession becomes "Jesus is Lord" rather than "Jesus is Messiah," the period when, in competition with the Heroes and Redeemer-Deities of the various Mystery-Religions of the Graeco-Roman world, Jesus must be made the Lord of the new Christian cult and so, in his deeds and nature, supreme over all the other Lords many and Gods many. The culmination of this we find first in Colossians and Ephesians, but finally in John's Gospel. In the Jewish period the *teaching* of Jesus receives the heavier emphasis; in the Gentile period, the *deeds and miracles* and *exalted nature* and power of Jesus.

Dibelius, one of the outstanding German leaders in Form-Criticism in his recent little book "Gospel Criticism and Christology", emphasizes at the end of Chapter I the fact that the findings of Form-Criticism show clearly that the familiar contrast, the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith, the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus, is a contrast that is embedded within the New Testament itself from the beginning. Paul practically limits his view to Jesus crucified, risen, exalted and coming again, as God's intervention for the salvation of men, the Christ of Faith. The Gospels do the same but bring into their sweep also both the words and deeds of the actual historical Jesus. Form-Criticism, however, emphasizes the fact that the Jesus of the Gospels is also the Christ of the Faith of the community rather than the objective Jesus of History. Thus, while Form-Criticism has not by any means created this puzzling contrast, the Jesus of History versus the Christ of Faith, it has made it much more acute, first by showing that this contrast is found in all the Gospels, even in Mark and secondly, by emphasizing the fact that the reliable historical element concerning Jesus is both less, and less discernible, than we had thought. How then are we to reconstruct our Christian view in accordance with these facts?

In the first place let us rejoice to say that this advanced form of criticism makes no suggestion to us, at least in its outstanding representatives, that there never was an historical Jesus or that Christianity today has no need of the historical Jesus. We have thus advanced somewhat at least, we may say, beyond the attitude of some, about twenty-five years ago, who sought to show that Christianity itself was another Oriental Mystery Religion and that there never was a real historical Jesus. For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, Christianity is surely wedded to History. It had its birth at a definite period, in a definite place and in a definite person. This relation to history of itself, to be sure, raises difficulties and problems, but these

difficulties and problems must not be solved by trying to tear Christianity loose from history. The leading exponents of Form-Criticism recognize that Jesus, the historical Jesus, was the beginning of Christianity. This is something to be thankful for. The serious result or *tendency* of Form-Criticism is the uncertainty it causes as to what the true historical picture of Jesus is. Form-Criticism impresses upon us the fact that none of our Gospels give us a satisfactory picture of the real Jesus—that his picture is seriously altered by added colors and shades from both the Christian community and the authors. Hitherto we had thought that by the careful and delicate work of literary and historical criticism we could, to change the figure, dig away the debris and finally disclose the real Jesus. This has been the conviction of the Liberal-Modernist position. But as Dibelius says, “all such criticism will find that the only explanation of the literary and historical peculiarities of the Gospels is that, from the very beginning, they set out to be testimonies in which the faithful spoke to the faithful about matters of faith. Gospel Criticism and Christology are therefore not enemies, but in true theology they belong together.” It may therefore rightly be said that Form-Criticism throws the well-known contrast, Jesus of History vs. Christ of Faith, into a somewhat altered and probably more distressing form. Certainly it places less weight and emphasis upon the Jesus of History. Many tend, therefore, perhaps prematurely, to throw up their hands in despair feeling that the Jesus of History is practically an unknown x whose value we have no means of discovering. Correspondingly Form-Criticism places greater weight and emphasis upon the whole Christian Movement and therefore upon the contribution of the community, that is, upon the content of the concept “the Christ of Faith.” The resulting tendency with many recent writers is to feel that Form-Criticism adds to the other forms of criticism in reducing the figure of Jesus to that of a prophet of Galilee, what the Rev. R. A. Edwards in the October 1935 issue of the Hibbert Journal calls “the ‘peasant’ theory of Jesus.” This closer penetration into the Oral period of Christianity has also sharpened realization of the fact that historical certitude at its best cannot of itself bear the full weight of Christian Faith. Historical certitude is not even as sure as philosophical certainty, logical certainty or moral certainty.

The crucial contrast, rendered more acute by this recent criticism, is still the Jesus of History vs. the Christ of Faith. Some would try to dispose of this contrast by saying that it is an outstanding example of what some one has described as the “cul-de-sac of a false alternative.” But such a supreme issue cannot be so easily waved aside. The crucial question is, What do we mean *or* what *should* we mean by the Christ of Faith? Perhaps we would agree in saying that this concept stands for the appreciation, interpretation and explanation of the Jesus of History in the varied, moving, changing life of the Christian community, primitive and later. As commonly understood there are three distinct strands or elements in this concept, the “Christ of Faith”, [in contrast with the “Jesus of History.”] There is first an enhanced experience of God, the Great Cosmic Spirit. Second, there is a new experience of the risen Jesus as the glorified Messiah. Thirdly, there is further understanding, appreciation, interpretation and explanation

of all this, centred mainly in the Jesus of History. This third element we may legitimately call Theology and Christology. Some, however, would omit the second item; viz., experience of the risen Jesus and would claim that the early Christians (and Christians ever since) had only increased experience of God and further understanding, appreciation, interpretation and explanation of God through the Jesus of History; i.e. Theology and Christology.

For myself, I take the former view; viz., that the concept “the Christ of Faith” included not only added experience of God with its accompanying theology both about God and about Jesus, i.e. Christology, but also the second factor; viz. experience of the actual risen Jesus. I interpret the Resurrection Faith, however, as something fundamentally spiritual based mainly upon the appearances (similar to the appearance to Paul) rather than upon the empty tomb and material contacts. There are two important things, however, to be noted here. First, the risen Jesus exalted to the presence of God is not thereby surreptitiously transformed into some other or different being or person. He is the Jesus of History. What the early Christians received due to their faith in Jesus as risen was not further factual information about him, but, by faith and vivid imagination, inspiration from his continued presence with them. Here I take sharp issue with Bultmann and especially with Grant who tends to substitute what he calls the Spiritual Christ for the Jesus of History. Grant says, (p. 56) “No early Christian would admit that a saying attributed to Jesus but received ‘through the Spirit’ had any less claim to historical truth and to full authenticity than a saying reported as uttered in Capernaum or Jerusalem during his earthly ministry.” Surely this is yielding prematurely and unwisely to the findings of Form-Criticism. Such an attitude is a flight from history. It means an embarking upon a vast uncharted sea of mingled faith, fancy and wishful thinking unanchored and unchecked by the facts of history. There is surely a better way.

The second important thing to be noted is that the concept, the Christ of Faith, includes both religious experience (whether of both the risen Jesus and God, or of God only, mistakenly attributed to the risen Jesus) and explanatory theology and Christology. Now it is exceedingly important today that mind and heart and conscience should be as sensitive as a photographic plate to the difference between Religion and Theology. The two are vitally related to be sure, but they are not identical. Many of our troubles today come from identifying Theology with Religion. Religion is fact, whether material or spiritual, appreciated by instinct, insight or gnosis and welcomed by decision and faith into vital personal experience. Religion is fact and experience. Theology on the other hand, is some one’s or some group’s understanding and explanation of fact and experience. It might, perhaps, be better to say that there are various types of Theology, in particular two. One might be termed the practical, symbolic expression of fact and experience in convincing testimony, preaching and missionary work. The other is the result of the *conscious* attempt to explain fact and experience intellectually. The one is more or less unconscious and spontaneous; the other is more or less conscious and deliberate. The latter becomes doctrine and dogma and creed. Le-

gitimate and necessary though it is, it tends to lose the vitality and dynamic of experience, to become, as it indeed really is, a system of philosophy. But such philosophy frequently needs to be re-baptized into history and experience and to be re-moulded into a *better* and *more adequate* theology. And this newer Theology will only be more or less adequate in explaining the fact and experience, probably never completely satisfactory intellectually just because the universe and life are so immensely complex and mysterious. The complete and satisfactory explanation of *matter* is still quite beyond the reach of differing and contending scientists and philosophers. Is it any marvel if the completely satisfactory explanation of *spirit* and *life* should await the efforts of men in the far distant vistas of the future?

Now the concept, the Christ of Faith, has in it three elements; viz. added experience, whether of God only or of God and the risen Jesus, a probably minor element of permanently valid theology and a probably much larger element of quite inadequate theology, interpreting and explaining both God and the Jesus of History. So far as the results of socio-historical and Form Criticism are concerned, our chief problem is in connection with interpreting and explaining the Jesus of History. In suggesting the adjustments we ought to make, I would emphasise the following points:

1. The first, foremost and basically fundamental thing in Christianity is God and faith in God. God is the great Cosmic Spirit, from whom we come, to whom we go, in whom we live and move and have our (very) being, the Infinite Spirit who is God over all blessed forevermore; over all, yet in all, transcendent and yet immanent, the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, whom no man has seen at any time, or ever can see, for God is Spirit. There is nothing from the point of view of Christianity that can equal in importance God and faith in God. Faith in God is both the first line of defence and the spearhead of attack. Granting all the difficulties which many raise against believing in God today, it nevertheless remains true that God and faith in God is the first and strongest anchor hold, potentially at least. If men cannot believe in God, faith in Jesus, whether the risen Jesus or the Jesus of History, will not count for very much or last very long.

2. Jesus, though not complete Christianity, was in the first place a real historical person in contrast with most of the Redeemer-deities of the Oriental Mystery Religions. This the most recent criticism strongly confirms. But this is not enough. Moses, Socrates, Buddha, also were historical persons who brought important revelations of God and life to their day and generation. In addition we must be able to believe that in the field of morals and religion, Jesus was, and is, supreme. The great question is, Will recent criticism permit intelligent and sincere men to believe this? I am satisfied it does and will. Granted to recent criticism that we do not know as much about the Jesus of History as we thought we did, granted that it is often difficult, sometimes impossible to be certain as to what belongs to Jesus himself and what springs from the changing advancing Christian community, granted that Christianity has both added to and subtracted from Jesus, granted that we must learn to accept truth on its own merit whether coming from Jesus or from the Christian community, granted that we

can never write a satisfactory biography of Jesus—granted all this and perhaps even more. It still remains true that in the moral and religious field Jesus remains supreme in the field of human history.

3. From God on the basis of the conviction that Jesus was risen and living and with them in Spirit (whether mistaken or real) there came a great renewal, expansion and re-inforcement of their life and religious experience. This they began to express and expound first, in simple, varied and partial ways in their preaching and missionary work; later in more consciously intellectual ways.

4. The Jesus of History not in complete details, but in his attitude to life and to God and men, in his vital principles and his cardinal convictions and above all, in his inner spirit of utter devotion to God and to men, exemplified supremely in his death—Jesus as disclosed by the most thorough-going and sincere criticism—the Jesus of History is the second great anchor hold of Christian faith and will continue to be unless and until (1) sound criticism indicates that the Jesus of History is morally and religiously inferior to some one else in the field of human history, or (2) until a greater than Jesus comes. If either of these things should happen, Jesus will certainly lose his crown. For religion is at bottom the mysterious urge in man, not merely toward the highest and best that has been, but toward the highest and the best that can be. If a greater and better than Jesus is disclosed, the world of serious and thoughtful men will surely beat a path to his door. The mills of the gods and of History may grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. In the long zig-zag process of the ages, in spite of the element of relativity, of ignorance and of sin, the best will win in religion. That religion will progressively and ultimately win which has the highest and best historical personality as its creative source and its continuous binding centre. But there is no hint or suggestion from the most reliable exponents of the most recent criticism that supremacy in the moral and religious field belongs to any other than to Jesus—the Jesus of History. Even Grant, who seems so pessimistic over the disclosures of Form-Criticism in regard to the Jesus of History, gives a picture of Jesus that is all that we need ask (p. 75).

But it is somewhat different when it comes to Theology. Theology is the result of reason and thought working unconsciously or consciously upon fact and experience, seeking to relate them to science, philosophy and a view of the world. Experience is central and decisive. Experience has been a word to conjure with in recent days—perhaps much abused and over worked. It is, nevertheless, experience, individual and corporate, that must bear the main weight of Christian faith. But experience itself is not 100% pure—not even 99% pure. It must be constantly checked, on the one hand by history, on the other hand, by reason and thought which latter gives us Theology, a factor which like history is contributory to experience, but subordinate to experience. Religion is experience and we must be sensitive to the distinction between experience and theology. The rock bottom fact in the origins of Christianity is this, that men and women in and through Jesus had a great new experience of God and life which produced the Gospel in its varied forms. This Gospel expressed in its simplest present-day form would be, "Forgiveness, new life and moral victory from God in

and through Jesus on the basis of repentance, faith and, to the best of one's knowledge and ability, complete commitment to God, His will and His Kingdom."

But when the first Christians began to preach their Gospel and particularly when they began to explain to themselves and to their hearers how such a thing as this could be, they said it was because Jesus was the Son-of-Man Messiah so declared of God by the Resurrection, and coming again in the immediate future on the clouds of heaven. Now, that Jesus was the Son-of-Man Messiah is manifestly not experience, it could not possibly be experience. It is Theology and Jewish Theology at that. When the Christian movement passed out into the Graeco-Roman world, the word Christ, meaning Messiah, became merely a proper name and the characteristic Christian confession adopted a new and different term; viz. Kyrios—the term of the Hellenistic Mystery Religions. Another form the explanation took was that Jesus was a new type of High Priest with all that that involved, the Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Manifestly that too is Jewish Theology, not experience, and was soon out-moded. Later still in the Hellenistic world Jesus was explained as the pre-existent Logos. Must we not say that this too is clearly not experience, but Theology and is destined to give way to something better and more adequate?

We may say then that recent criticism seems to be requiring of us or suggesting to us a shift of emphases. We must put more emphasis, in fact the supreme weight, upon Experience and upon God as the supreme source of all valid religious experience. But even religious experience requires a catharsis, a cleansing from superstition, mere wishful thinking, magic and outmoded theology. The second important weight must be put upon the Jesus of History, not the Christ of Faith—Jesus as disclosed by the most thorough-going, sincere criticism. Here, however, recent criticism is telling us that owing to the conditions we must not expect sufficient history to write a satisfactory modern biography of *esus*. All we need ask, however, is evidence that Jesus was and is supreme in the moral and religious sphere of human history. The best recent criticism, I claim, helps to show this. Thirdly we must lessen our emphasis on Theology in the sense that we should be ready to change it in the effort to find one that is better and more adequate—this with the proviso that we keep the experience of God in and through Jesus.

Aramaic Gospel Sources and Form-Criticism

W. R. TAYLOR.

The translation of the four Gospels published in 1933 by Professor C. C. Torrey has elicited widely differing opinions with reference to the validity of his main thesis. The views of recent students of the problem may be said to fall into four classes. There is first that of Professor Torrey himself as it is stated in the introduction to his work: "the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John were composed in Aramaic on the basis of popular documents widespread in Palestine, and they were by others translated into Greek without intended change; also, Luke employed only Semitic sources, assembling them into an especially complete Gospel, which he himself translated." Secondly, there is the 'minimal hypothesis', as Professor T. W. Manson styles it:¹ "most scholars would now agree that the authentic pieces of the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels and the earliest stories about Jesus were originally formulated in Aramaic whether or not they ever took written shape in that language." Obviously this view gives considerable latitude to those who hold it, since there can be wide differences of opinion as to what material is authentic and early. But there is a third view which is perhaps more minimal than Professor Manson anticipated. It is stated by Professor D. W. Riddle:² "when Dr. Torrey's Aramaic gospels are studied in the light of the history of gospel-research, it is seen that there is little in his theory that is new. The inexorable logic of history plainly points to the fate of the earlier theories which were so closely similar. It is highly probable that Dr. Torrey's Aramaic gospels will go the way of Eichhorn's and Marshall's, the way of all those theories which have depended upon Semitic documents to solve the Synoptic problem." In Professor Riddle's article there seems to be a certain confusion of Professor Torrey's theory of the Aramaic sources of the Gospels with his theory of their growth and formation, two interests which ought to be kept distinct. Finally, there are scholars such as Professor Manson,³ Professor Karl Kundsinn,⁴ and Professor E. Littmann⁵ who admit evidences of the existence of one or more Aramaic documents behind the Gospels. Professor Manson's conclusions are specific: "The only case in which one can feel fairly confident that a written Aramaic source lies behind the Gospels is that of the document Q. I think it very probable that such an Aramaic source existed and that it is the writing referred to in the tradition handed down by Papias. It is also, I think, probable that much of the matter peculiar to Matthew is derived from an Aramaic document or documents. It is at least possible that an Aramaic document is one of the sources of the Fourth Gospel. Mark, and the matter peculiar to Luke seems to me to depend on oral tradition rather than written Aramaic sources, though a great part of this tradition was doubtless Palestinian, and in the first instance, Aramaic." Dalman in his studies proceeds cautiously with the basal assumption that the words of Jesus were originally in Aramaic.⁶ But, as he establishes no criteria by which we

can distinguish between the genuine words of Jesus and those that are of secondary origin, his investigations are practically little different from those which assume the existence of a Semitic source behind the synoptic gospels.

In general, the reasons which in recent years influenced scholars to assume the dependence of the Synoptic Gospels and even that of the Fourth Gospel on Aramaic sources, have been set forth by Wellhausen in his *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (1905) pp. 14-43. Later investigations and discoveries may have modified some of the details of Wellhausen's argument, but for the most part it defines those things which a student acquainted with Greek and Semitic idioms notes on reading the Gospels. In short, the language in which they are written appears to be a Semitized Greek. The papyri evidences have served to confirm such a conclusion. No document has been found that proves the existence of a jargon which might account for the characteristic features of the language of these books. IV Macabees, which belongs to the century in which the Gospels appeared, indicates that what is described as 'truly Greek' was used and understood in Jewish circles. Like the Greek of the *LXX*, the Greek of the Gospels is written in an idiom which stands apart from that employed in either literary or popular *koine*.⁷ Wellhausen's deductions were stated without equivocation and, since at this date there seems to be some uncertainty about them, they should be recalled to mind. "*Liegt den Evangelien nur die mündliche aramäische Tradition zu grunde? haben die Verfasser diese sofort griechisch niedergeschrieben, wobei sie natürlich des Aramäischen kundig sein müssten und unter dem Einfluss desselben standen? Denken liesse sich das, aber das Wahrscheinliche ist doch, dass das Evangelium, das von Haus aramäisch war, zuerst auch zuerst auch aramäisch niedergeschrieben wurde.*"⁸

None knew better than Wellhausen the difficulties that beset the scholar who undertakes to reproduce the Aramaic *Urtext*. The first of them is the lack of Palestinian Aramaic documents of the first century A.D. and the resultant ignorance of the exact idiom of the period. This defect of literary material, however, cannot be cited as invalidating the substance of the theory. It is rather late in the day to say that the scantiness of the remains of this Aramaic indicates that however large the public for spoken Aramaic, "it was not a public which called forth an extensive written product."⁹ It is common knowledge that Josephus issued the first draft of his book, the *History of the Jewish War*, in Aramaic, for a public which included not only Jews at home, but Parthians, Babylonians, the most remote tribes of Arabia, his countrymen beyond the Euphrates and the inhabitants of Adiabene.¹⁰ As Thackeray states¹¹ Josephus was in this matter commissioned by the Romans to write such a history for purposes of propaganda, that is, with a view to discouraging unrest and revolt in Western Asia. Evidently at that time there was a large public for written Aramaic.¹² The survival of the literature of an age or even of a country is often a matter of accident. For example, if we learn of the Seleucids chiefly through the scanty evidences that coins afford and of the Ptolemies through a wealth of *papyri*-remains, we cannot conclude that the Seleucid kingdom had no public for literature. In fact, such caprices

of fortune may lead to a distorted view of the historical conditions in such matters. It was to guard against such misconceptions of the place of Aramaic in Palestine in the first century that Dalman in the second edition of *Die Worte Jesu* (1930), pp. 1-10, reviews the evidences presented earlier in his *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch* (1905). These evidences might have been supplemented by those indirect ones offered by the Nabataean inscriptions of the first century A.D. and by the structural features of Aramaic that, wherever in the East its remains emerge, exhibit the marks of literary use and tradition. We can posit too that an Aramaic-speaking public normally would call forth a written product.¹³

Nor is there much cogency in the argument that because theories of Semitic gospels or gospel sources have in the course of more than one hundred years failed to present an incontrovertible case, the problems that occasioned them must be dismissed as illusory. Such theories were at a disadvantage not only by reason of the prejudices born of the age-long conviction that the Gospels in Greek were primary documents, but also through the lack of philological knowledge equal to the task involved.¹⁴ But the amoeboid character of Synoptic theories which have won more general acceptance warns us that the last word on Gospel-origins has not been said, and the persistence with which theories of Semitic sources reappear suggest that the facts which bring them into being have not been satisfactorily integrated into the current orthodox theories.

Nor does it seem more cogent to refer Aramaic elements in the Gospels to the influence of spoken Aramaic in the form of Christian preaching on the early records. If the Aramaic elements consisted only of social background, atmosphere, cult-terminology, and related matters, such a position might be tenable. But, as things ahe, it fails to take account of the literary problems presented in the text of the Gospels. Among these may be noted, (a) differences in parallel synoptic traditions due to a misunderstanding or corruption of a written source which we are warranted in believing to be Aramaic—e.g. Mt. 23:26 preserves correctly the meaning of Luke 11:41 where an original *abedu saddiqa* ('make right') was mistaken for *abedu sadaqa* or *sidqa* ('give alms'),¹⁵—(b) obscure elements in the synoptic tradition which become intelligible through the assumption of an Aramaic source—e.g. Mk. 7:3 the difficult *pugme* is the result of the confusion of the Aramaic *ligmar* ('at all') with *ligmod* (= *pugme*)¹⁶ so that the original source read 'they do not eat at all unless etc.': Lk. 11:48 where the awkward lack of an object after *oikodomeite* is to be explained as due to a confusion of *benin* ('children') with *banen* ('build') i.e. 'they killed them and you are their children'—(c) strange idioms, such as the arrangement of words in an order foreign to Greek with consequent confusion in the sense,—e.g. Mt. 5:37 the Aramaic word-order is difficult in Greek; a better rendering is given in James 5:12. The translation of the verse is "Let your word 'yes' be yes and your 'no' be no; whatever goes beyond this is of the evil-one"¹⁷—(d) the puzzling use of particles and cases—e.g. the preposition *eis* to introduce a direct object, (*ebalon eis ta dora*) (Lk. 21:4); the dative case of a direct object, (*hosanna to huio Daveid*) (Mt. 21:9). Both instances, however, are

intelligible as Aramaic constructions with the preposition "l". Mk. 9:10, the interrogative particle translated traditionally and even by Torrey as 'what' is, as the context indicates, to be turned as 'how' or 'after what manner', a common value of the Hebrew *mah* and the Aramaic *ma* as we see in Num. 23:8 (LXX) where *ti arasomai* = *mah eqqob* ('how shall I curse'). Another instructive example is supplied by the text of the Golden Rule. Mt. 7:12 *panta oun hosa ean thelete*, Lk. 6:31 *kai kathos thelete*. In the Matthean text *panta* is probably not to be explained as an example of Matthew's introduction of *pas* in order to heighten his effects, as Professor Manson believes,¹⁸ but rather as a too literal translation of the *kol* in the Aramaic *kolqabel di*. In LXX *kol-qabel* is translated *kathoti* (Dan. 2:8), *kathos* (Dan. 2:40; 6:10), *kathaper* (Dan. 2:10, 41). Matthew and Luke therefore have a common text before them, but exhibit differences in skill in the rendition of it. Such citations are sufficient to indicate that in the Greek text of the Synoptic Gospels there are certain problems for which the assumption of an Aramaic *Urtext* affords a reasonable solution.

One might pass beyond such textual phenomena when the argument seems to be irrefutable, and consider certain instances where the evidences, if not at once so decisive, cumulatively tend to establish the theory. For example, it is probable that Professor Torrey's emendation of 'in that day' (Lk. 10:12) by 'in the day of judgment' correctly assumes a mistaken reading of *b'yoma dina* as *b'yoma dena*. Lk. 12:3 the form *anth hon hosa*, long recognized as a late Hebraism in the LXX (= *bshel asher*),¹⁹ probably served through this influence of the LXX as a convenient translation of the Aramaic *bdil d*. The fact that *hosa* is balanced in the second half of the apothegm by *ho* points to the Aramaic construction *bdil d . . . d*.²⁰ The use of the numeral *had* 'one' followed by another numeral expresses in Aramaic a multiplicative (cp. Dan. 3:19, *had shib'ah*.) Mk. 4:8, 20, the difficult *eis* and *en* about which the textual evidences are uncertain should read *heis* and *hen*. The syntax of certain relative clauses exhibits the Semitic idiom of the redundant antecedent incorporated into the clause, or, in other words, of the retrospective pronoun familiar to students of Hebrew Grammar, e.g. Mk. 7:25 *hes eiche to thugatrimon autes*, Mk. 13:19 *hoia toiaute*. Of such constructions even Moulton²¹ says "The N. T. examples are all from places where Aramaic sources are certainly suspected." The use of the genitive absolute when in fact the noun or pronoun is not properly absolute and the particle might have agreed with the word in question is more common apparently in the N. T. than in the papyri.²² This usage is best understood as the Semitic nominal or circumstantial clause, e.g. Mt. 18:25 *me echontos de autou apodounai ekeleusen auton*, also cp. Mk. 5:21; 10:17; 11:27; 13:1; 3, 11, 13. One can scarcely escape the recognition of the idiom in *tauta de autou enthumethentos . . . ephane auto*. (Mt. 1:20). To satisfy those who contend that support for the Aramaisms of the Gospels should be found in Daniel one may compare the frequent use in Daniel of *edayin* to introduce a new moment in a narrative with the similar use of *tote*, *en ekeino to kairo* and *euthus be-edayin* in the Gospel narrative. The common Semitic practice of putting a compound

subject in *casus pendens* is illustrated in Mt. 6:3; Mk. 12:40, cp. II Chron. 7:21 (LXX). The fact that such constructions and circumlocutions as we have been citing are idiomatic in Aramaic weakens considerably the force of parallels that occur sporadically in Greek poetry or prose.²³ The observation of Wellhausen seems to be sound—*Wenn aus allen Ecken und Enden der griechischen Literatur ein paar zerspreute analogien zu einer sprachlichen Erzählung zusammengebracht werden können, die in den Evangelien auf ganz kleinem Raum verhältnismässig oft begebenet, so hat das nicht viel zu besagen*.²⁴

The general case that may be presented for the Aramaic origin of the Gospels ought not to be under-rated because of certain arguments that have been advanced against it. For instance, the difficulty of making assured *retroversions* does not modify in any fundamental respect the significance for the theory of the textual phenomenon out of which it arises. It is generally accepted that I Maccabees is a translation of a Hebrew text, but the great diversity that 'retroversions' might show has never weighed against the conclusion which appears obvious to students of Hebrew. In Old Testament criticism with both the LXX and the Hebrew text before us the problem of *retroversions* with which we are regularly confronted emerges without prejudice to the relation between the two texts. 'Retroversions' even in the most ideal conditions for their execution are in the nature of things attended with difficulty. Nor is the deficiency of extant Palestinian Aramaic literature contemporary with the Gospels an insuperable barrier to some secure judgments on the relation of the Gospels to Aramaic sources. The Aramaic language had developed before the time of Jesus certain characteristics which it retained quite tenaciously throughout its long history and its extensive domain. As other languages, it is marked by its own genius or soul. Hence its idiom is easily recognized whenever fragments of its literature come to light, and there is no ground for doubting that it can be detected in translation-works which do not conform completely to another idiom. But such a statement does not imply that more is to be expected in the reproduction of the original Aramaic form of the Gospels than, for example, in the reproduction of a lost Hebrew text from a Greek translation. Even if students were satisfied that the Greek text of Ecclesiasticus was a translation-work, the discovery of the Hebrew text furnished them with something new and beyond their power to anticipate correctly. The latter fact, however, did not impair their earlier assumption. It will be apparent, then, that the faithful identification of the Aramaic antecedents of the text of the gospels must often wait on fuller knowledge of the local or dialectal usages in the first century in Palestine. In the meantime the caution of Wellhausen must be kept in mind—*Man hat sich namentlich zu hüthen, durch Retroversion ganz neue, sensationelle Aussagen zu gewinnen, die dem überlieferten griechischen Wortlaut ins Gesicht schlagen*. The occasional neglect of this sound advice on the part of those whose scholarship is at times too exuberant does not impair the main contention. To those, on the other hand, who give too much weight to such incidents, the other warning should be repeated 'Es gilt nicht und es hilft nicht den Kopf in den griechischen Busch zu stecken.'

Two phases of the problem need at this time some special attention, (a) whether the evidences of Aramaic can be found beyond the limits of Q which a growing number of students concede to be a translation, and (b) what relation does the presence or absence of such evidences bear to the 'Sitz im Leben' problems of Form-criticism. These questions can be examined together since certain texts have reference to both. Since Luke 13:1-5; 6-9; 31-33 is not a portion of Q and is illustrative of three types of *apophthegmata* which the *Fermgeschichtlicher* recognize, it can serve as a suitable section for examination. Luke 13:1-5 seems in form to accord with Bultmann's description of the Greek apophthegm²⁵ and might on this ground be viewed as a product of an Hellenistic environment and therefore of a relatively late date. Bultmann, however, because of its subject-matter seems to regard it as Palestinian in origin.²⁶ At any rate, according to Klostermann²⁷ it is not to be included among the genuine *logia* and reflects the legend-making tendencies of the early Church. But early or late, Hellenistic or Palestinian, this text exhibits the same marks of Aramaic origin which have been noted in passages from Q. The Lucan *en auto to kairo* renders *ba sha'ta* (cp. Dan. 3:6, 15; 4:30; 5:5). In addition to the use of the retrospective pronoun the nominative absolute and the idiomatic *apokritheis eipen* (cp. 'aneh w-amar Dan. 2:5, 8, 27) there is the use in the sense not uncommon to *kol* of 'the rest', 'more than the rest of the Galileans'. In Luke 13:6-9 there are at least three characteristic Aramaic idioms, (a) *idou tria ete aph hou* (v. 7) i.e. (*aru shnin tlath min-di*) 'since for three years now,' the particle *min-di* being, as the context suggests, *grundbestimmend* rather than *zeitbestimmend*;²⁸ (b) the suppression of the apodosis in v. 9, 'zwar auch griechisch—aber im Semitischen regelmässig'²⁹ (cp. Dan. 3:15); (c) *eis to mellon* which, as Torrey has noted, renders *lhal'ah* 'thenceforth', the *l* having a value here similar to that in *laqabel* and such forms. In Luke 13:31-33 there is not only the phrase *en aute te hora* to which we have already referred, but the obscurity in the sense of vv. 32, 33 disappears only when (a) *teleioumai* is recognized as an error due to a translator's confusion of *mshallam* i.e. 'about to be perfected', and *mashlam* i.e. 'about to be delivered up or arrested', and (b) after *aurion* there is read *poiesai* (= *me'ebad*) which had been omitted in the Aramaic text because of its resemblance to *me'ebad* (= *poreuesthai*).³⁰ Such evidences indicate that the influence of Aramaic are to be traced clearly in material outside of Q and also in traditions that according to the current canons of criticism cannot be early. This latter point may be substantiated further by reference to one or two sayings ascribed to Jesus. According to Bultmann³¹ Lk. 12:10 is an example of the later Hellenistic influences on the Gospel-tradition, since the Spirit is exalted above the Son of Man. Some seem disposed to assume therefore that such a tradition would present no Aramaic idioms in the text.³² But the evidences do not support such a deduction. Of the three forms of the tradition the Lucan, which the Form-critics believe to be the latest, corresponds most closely to Aramaic in style and syntax. In conformity to Semitic usage, the indefinite relative clause placed first in *causus pendens* is resumed by a pronoun in the same case as it would have had in a simple sentence; the preposition

eis (1) has the force of *b* which in Mt. 12:32 is better rendered by *kata*; and *blasphemein eis* reproduces *gaddeph . . . b*; the impersonal use of the passive (*aphethesetai*) is familiar to the student of Aramaic. Of Lk. 17:22 (not in Q) Bultmann says³³ that it is possibly a product of Luke or of an earlier redactor. Nevertheless we can observe Aramaic elements in the text for, as Torrey has correctly noted *mian ton hemeron* which has been a crux for the exegetes is a faulty rendering of *lahadah yomayyah* which, as the context indicates, means not "one of the days" but 'greatly the days' i.e. (you will desire) greatly (to see) the days (of the Son of Man). We are told that such parables as we meet in Lk. 15 reflect the Hellenistic conception of the Gospel or, at least, the special emphasis in the preaching of the Gentile churches.³⁴ But, here again, among others, there appear such unmistakable idioms as in (a) (*dote daktulion eis ten cheira autou*) (v. 22),³⁵ (b) *idou tcsauta ete douleuo soi* (v. 29) = 'although these many years I have served you.' In v. 18 *emarton eis* renders *habeth . . .* ^l³⁶ which implies that *ouranon* is substituted for *theos* (cp. 15:10; 12:8)³⁷; he is here apparently translating a text in which this scruple manifested itself (cp. 15:7). If we turn from the text to the form of the narrative we are again met by Semitic characteristics. The prose narrative culminates in a metrical outburst (vv. 24, 32, and compare Dan. 3:33 *et passim*) and throughout the parable speech is subordinated to action for the expression of deep emotion. (Cp. vv. 12, 13, 20, 22).³⁸ Bultmann's statement that it is improbable that Luke 2:31 ff. and the other infancy narratives took form in a Palestinian community, but that their *Gestaltung* occurred in a more advanced stage of Christianity than that in Palestine³⁹ is much too sweeping. Paul Humbert—in a recent study of Biblical annunciations⁴⁰—has easily demonstrated that they are all of one type (cp. Ju. 13:3 ff., 13:7; Gen. 16:11 ff.; Is. 7:14 ff.; Lk. 1:31 ff.), and the *Sitz im Leben* is the stereotyped form followed in the consultation of the oracle on the part of childless women. Undoubtedly the difficulty of sustaining his position has led Bultmann to modify it significantly by the concession that there were different strata in Hellenistic Christianity of which one was Jewish-Hellenistic—a quantity still dimly recognized, as he admits.

A review of such facts as we have sought to bring forward, must lead to the conclusion that the progressive changes within the early Christian Church which the *Formgeschichtlicher* stress must have taken place within an Aramaic-speaking and-writing community. In whatever part of Syria or Palestine we place it, the evidences show that it was Palestinian in background.⁴¹ Theories which do not take account of Aramaic Gospels, it would seem, must be readapted to the evidences or abandoned. If it be held by some that the Gospels reflect a situation that is foreign to a Palestinian environment since they are influenced by the doctrine of a miraculously born *savior-lord* who imparted to his followers a secret *gnosis* and instituted a sacramental meal therewith, and if it be deduced that, since such things are inconsistent with Aramaic documents, there could have been no such documents, then it must be answered that whether such premisses be right or wrong, the conclusion is invalidated by the strength of the philological arguments against it.

- 1 *The Expository Times*, XLVII, No. 1, (Oct., 1935).
- 2 *J. B. L.*, LIV, Part III (Sept., 1935), p. 138.
- 3 *The Expository Times*, XLVII, No. 1, (Oct., 1935).
- 4 *Das Urchristentum*, (1929), p. 12.
- 5 *Z. N. W.*, XXXIV, pp. 20-34.
- 6 G. Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, (1930), p. 57.
- 7 Cp. Thackeray—*Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek*, pp. 26 f.; Torrey, *The Four Gospels* (1933) p. 249.
- 8 Wellhausen, *op. cit.* p. 35; *vide*, *J. B. L. LIV* (1935) p. 128.
- 9 *J. B. L. LIV* (1935) p. 136.
- 10 *B. J.* i.6.
- 11 Thackeray, *Josephus* (1929) p. 27.
- 12 Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik* (1925) p. 17.
- 13 *J. B. L.*, LIV, p. 136.
- 14 Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, p. 49 f.
- 15 Torrey *op. cit.* p. 310; see also Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, p. 372.
- 16 Torrey, *op. cit.* p. 300.
- 17 cp. Dalman, *op. cit.*, pp. 186, 352.
- 18 *Expos. Times*, XLVII, 1, (Oct., 1935), p. 8.
- 19 Cp. Thackeray, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 25.
- 20 *Oxford Hebrew Lexicon*, 980 a.
- 21 J. H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, p. 95.
- 22 A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 514.
- 23 Radermacher, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 24 Wellhausen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- 25 R. Bultmann, *Die Erforschung der Synoptischen Evangelien* (1925), pp. 21-23.
- 26 *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition* (1931) p. 57.
- 27 *Das Lukas Evangelium* (Handbuch zum N. T.) p. 142.
- 28 Cp. Marti, *Biblisch-Aramaische Grammatik*, p. 109.
- 29 Klostermann, *op. cit.*, p. 310.
- 30 Torrey—*op. cit.*, p. 310.
- 31 *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, p. 138; cp. also Karl Kondsins, *Das Urchristentum*, p. 30 f.
- 32 Riddle, *J. B. L.* vol. LIV (1935) p. 137.
- 33 *op. cit.*, p. 137.
- 34 Kondsins. *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- 35 Cp. *Gen.* 41:42 and J. A. Montgomery, *J. B. L.*, Vol. 53, p. 91.
- 36 Construction used with persons, Dalman, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
- 37 *idem*, p. 161.
- 38 cp. a similar highly emotional narrative *Gen.* 49:1-10; contrast the Greek ideal expression of such emotions, *Iliad* IX, 488-500.
- 39 *op. cit.*, pp. 329 f.
- 40 *Archiv für Orientforschung*. Bd. X. (1935) pp. 77-80.
- 41 Kondsins, *op. cit.*, p. 37; see also C. H. Dodd, *The Gospel Parables*, Bulletin The John Rylands Library, vol. 16, No. 2. (1932).

Jesus and the Gentiles

JOHN LOWE.

It is a critical commonplace that Jesus neither preached to the Gentiles himself nor instructed his disciples to do so. The argument which leads to this conclusion is extremely strong. It is so familiar that it needs only to be summarized. In the first place, when the Gentile Mission is launched in the Apostolic Church the impression given by Acts is that this is a *new* venture. No one appeals to either the example or the precept of the Lord. It starts spontaneously, almost accidentally (Acts xi. 20), and the result is an entirely novel situation with problems which have to be settled on their merits, not by invoking authority. At any rate the authority is not on the side of the champions of the Gentile Mission. They are regarded as the innovators and it may be surmised, reading between the lines of the polemical portions of St. Paul's Epistles, that it was his opponents who were able, if any one was, to appeal to the Lord. It was evidently assumed by the Judaizers, whether rightly or wrongly, that the "Pillar Apostles", those who had been closest to the Lord in the flesh, would be on their side. That is probably true of James, in my judgment. A decision as to his attitude depends upon the conclusions arrived at with respect to the historicity of Acts xv, into which we need not here enter. As things turned out Peter seems in the end to have come down on the liberal side but it is significant that he has to be converted by a miraculous vision. Even if the Cornelius episode is ante-dated or altogether unhistorical, it does not matter. Whoever told it felt that Peter needed more than association with Jesus for the conviction that the Gentiles were fit company for him to keep. Now it may be urged that all this controversy in the Apostolic Church turns upon the terms on which the Gentiles were to be admitted to the Church rather than upon the permissibility of the mission to them. The burning question is not whether the Gospel is to be preached to them but whether they have to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. That is true enough and on the strength of that it has been argued that Jesus might have contemplated and commanded the Gentile Mission without being specific as to details, and that it was simply in the carrying out of his commands that these practical difficulties arose. But the fact remains that these difficulties were bound to arise just as soon as the conversion of Gentiles was undertaken and it is hard to imagine that they would have been entirely unforeseen. It was not a new problem to Judaism. If Jesus ever said anything about incorporation of Gentiles *as such* (i.e. without becoming full Jews first) in the community of his followers, one would expect to hear echoes of the controversy which such a radical proposal must have started. But there is not a trace in the tradition of any trouble over this point either during the ministry or in the primitive Jerusalem Church until after the dispersion of the "Hellenists". This is an argument from silence but it is a relatively strong one. Considering only

the evidence of the history of the early Church, it is true, I think, that the course of events is most easily explicable on the assumption that Jesus never raised the point of the admission of Gentiles. If he contemplated their conversion at all, it was a conversion to *Judaism* such as even his opponents the Pharisees sought.

The second main item in the critical argument consists of the group of Gospel sayings which expressly limit both Jesus' mission and that of his immediate followers to the Jews, and in some instances seem to imply a disparaging view of the Gentiles. Perhaps no stress should be laid upon Mt. xviii. 17 ("let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican"), since this is part of an ecclesiastical disciplinary rule which is not very likely to go back to Jesus. But there is also Mt. x. 29 ("Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come"), and the explicit prohibition of Mt. x. 5 ("Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans"). Streeter would relegate these to his supposed Matthaean source M, a Judaistic and therefore untrustworthy document, but M is a very dubious possibility and it is just as likely that such sayings come from the same source as the Q material and have been dropped by Luke. Whether Mt. vii. 6 ("Give not that which is holy unto the dogs") is relevant here, it is impossible to say in the absence of the critical setting of the saying. Finally there is the episode of the Syro-phenician woman, Mk. vii. 24-30 = Mt. xv. 21-28. Mark's version, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs", might, if the *first* be emphasized, be taken to allow for a subsequent mission to the "dogs". That may very well be Mark's own understanding of it. But Matthew's addition, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel", shows the way he interpreted his source and to my mind gives the impression of originality. The plain sense of the story in either version is that Jesus was conscious of a mission only to his own people. Of course it is possible, quite apart from the source-analysis, to dismiss all these "Judaistic" sayings as creations of the Judaizers, fabricated at the time of the controversy in order to bolster up their cause. It seems to me, however, very arbitrary to do so. How would they get into Gospels which taken as a whole favour and pre-suppose the Gentile Mission, unless they came from a reliable tradition? That is not an absolutely conclusive objection in view of the contradictions which do occur in a single Gospel, but we must not reject them merely because we dislike them without solid additional grounds.

The third argument in the critical case is the paucity and unreliability of any positive evidence that Jesus did engage in or sanction preaching to the Gentiles. This is the most forcible of all. (See on this point B. S. Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospels*, p. 102 ff.). Here is a dominant interest of the Church at the time when the Gospels were being produced. Surely any action or saying of the Lord's which could be taken to justify the inclusion of the Gentiles would be treasured. Yet the only explicit commands to this effect in the Synoptics are three post-resurrection sayings, Mk. xvi. 15, Mt. xxviii. 19, Lk. xxiv. 47, of which one belongs to the spurious ending of Mark and the second presupposes a liturgical practice which is not primitive.

None of them can be regarded as historical. In the tradition dealing with the ministry there are just two sayings which unambiguously and in so many words point forward to the Gentile Mission, Mk. xiii. 10 ("the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations") and Mk. xiv. 9 ("Whosoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world"). These are important and we shall have to return to them. It is true that other passages have been adduced but they will not stand examination. Nothing can be made of the departure into Gentile territory related in Mk. vii. 24 ff. Apart from the unsatisfactory character of Mark's geographical indications, the visit is not said to be for the purpose of preaching nor does any preaching follow. Some have thought on the strength of Mk. xi. 17 ("My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations") that Jesus' anger at the trafficking in the Temple was due, in part at least, to the fact that the market was established in the Court of the Gentiles. But the point is not stressed (both the parallels omit the phrase "for all the nations") and we have good reason to believe that many Jews disliked what went on. The parable of the Wicked Husbandman (Mk. xii. 4-11 and parallels) as it stands no doubt foreshadows the rejection of Israel in favour of the Gentiles. Matthew's version certainly does; see especially Mt. xxi. 43 "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof". And even Mark's simpler "he shall give the vineyard to others" was most likely understood by the evangelist in the same sense. But the whole parable is allegorized in such a way that its present form cannot be ascribed to Jesus. As far as Q sayings are concerned, the most worthy of note is Mt. viii. 11 = Lk. xiii. 29 ("Many shall come from the east and the west, etc."). Matthew inserts this in the story of the Centurion's Servant and as he uses it it is certainly meant to refer to the Gentiles. His addition in verse 12, "the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth", makes this quite plain. But Luke places the saying quite differently (evidently it had no original connexion with the story of the Centurion) and the *logion* itself has no necessary reference to the Gentiles. There is no contrast with "the sons of the kingdom", only a contrast between the present generation of Jews and the patriarchs and prophets. The saying is very like several Old Testament passages referring to the gathering of the dispersed Jews. Again in the parable of the Marriage Feast a comparison of the parallels is instructive (Mt. xxii. 2-10 = Lk. xiv. 16-24). Here it is Luke who has most clearly brought in an allegorical reference to the Gentiles. That exhausts the relevant Markan and Q material. Of matter peculiar to the first and third Gospels there is Matthew's phrase in x. 18, "for a testimony to them *and to the Gentiles*". But even assuming that this implies preaching, the significant words are a Matthaean addition to Mk. viii. 9. Perhaps they are Matthew's abbreviated substitute for Mk. xiii. 10. Nor has Luke for all his supposed universalism much more to offer. The three passages, ix. 51 ff. (the Samaritan village), x. 25 ff. (the Good Samaritan) and xvii. 16 (the thankful Samaritan leper), prove only that Jesus was superior to vulgar anti-Samaritan prejudice, by no means that he undertook or contemplated missionary work in Samaria. The reference to the Queen of Sheba and the men of Nineveh in xi. 31 f. states only that

certain Gentiles were more righteous than certain Jews, a proposition with which few would have quarrelled. A more probable case is the difficult story of the rejection at Nazareth (iv. 16-30), especially the sayings in verses 24-27 about Elijah and Elisha ministering to Gentiles. The whole section presents many problems. Several recent investigators hold that it is a mere spinning out of Mk. vi. 1-6 and devoid of historical value. I am myself inclined to believe that Luke drew upon L and that there may be a historical basis, although Luke has antedated the episode and worked in a number of originally independent sayings. As it stands it is pretty clear that Luke has the subsequent course of events in mind but he has only hinted at it indirectly and the effect is largely due to the combination of the appended sayings with the story of the rejection, a combination which is very likely due to the evangelist himself. Finally may be mentioned Lk. xxi. 24 ("until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"). The context makes it most probable that this refers to the period of Gentile domination.

Altogether the evidence is amazingly slight. The tendency on the part of the evangelists to find a reference to the Gentiles where originally there was none is apparent and yet in spite of that they have only gone a very little way in imposing their view upon the sources. Apart from the post-resurrection discourses where they allowed themselves greater liberty, it is mostly a matter of slight modifications and veiled allegory. We are left with only two clear cases where no scruples arise as a result of source analysis, Mk. xiii. 10 and xiv. 9. The question is how much weight these can bear in view of the other evidence. They are by no means free of difficulty. Mark's account of the anointing, especially the linking of it with the burial, is suspect to many; chapter thirteen is admittedly composite and contains inauthentic elements; and both passages contain a word, *euaggelion*, the use of which by Jesus there is some reason to doubt (see Kittel's *Theol. Wörterbuch*, *sub voce*). On the other hand it is to be noticed that neither of them claims for Jesus any personal preaching to Gentiles. Neither of them necessarily implies that he directed his immediate followers to engage in such a mission. They only prove, if genuine, that he looked forward to it at some unspecified time in the future. Indeed one of them, xiii. 10, is definitely eschatological in character. Summing up on the basis of this evidence it can be affirmed that any personal participation by Jesus in missionary work among Gentiles or any direct command to his disciples to launch such an enterprise is so highly improbable as to be virtually impossible. We may for the moment leave open the possibility that he contemplated something of the kind taking place in the future.

The next question which faces us is, Can we give a reason for this limitation? The view that Jesus simply shared current Jewish hostility towards the heathen is supported only by the single passage (perhaps two passages if Mt. vii. 6 be included) in which the opprobrious epithet "dogs" occurs and by the disparaging "let him be as the Gentile" of Mt. xviii. 17. The latter, as we have seen, is for other reasons almost certainly secondary. The former is not so easily disposed of and I must confess I am not impressed by minimizing explanations which,

making capital out of the diminutive *kunaria*, try to take the sting out of the expression by supposing the animals in question to be well-loved domestic pets. Nor is it more satisfactory to suppose that Jesus was saying what he did not mean in order to draw the woman out. One must not twist the plain sense of the passage which as it stands contains a distinctly uncomplimentary reference to the Gentiles. But unless one is deliberately looking for flaws in the character of Jesus, this isolated saying cannot be allowed to stand as authentic for it contravenes all his teaching of love and conflicts sharply with his whole attitude as to Jewish national exclusiveness. It may be argued that his loyalty to the Law (Mt. v. 17-18 etc.) implies a belief in Jewish privilege but this overlooks the fact that he discerned different levels of value and obligation within the Law and subordinated everything else to the law of love. Moreover, when he speaks about the conditions of salvation, he speaks to man as such; nothing turns upon membership in the chosen race. It is fair to say that in all his teaching about God and man, about the Kingdom and the qualifications for admission to it, there is an implicit universalism.

The view that the idea of preaching to the Gentiles simply never occurred to Jesus is a little easier but still hardly tenable. He was aware of the zealot and not unsuccessful propaganda being conducted by Jews throughout the Diaspora. Apart from that he knew his Bible, and who could read Isaiah without facing the problem of the mission of Israel to the nations of the world?

All this only sharpens our problem. He had no anti-Gentile prejudice. The central features in his own teaching were universalistic in their implications. He must have been conscious of the universalistic strain in the best prophetic teaching. On every count we might think that he was almost bound to make the wider appeal and not restrict his ministry to Israel. Yet the actual evidence is stubborn and strong that he did the opposite. Again, Why? The usual answer given by those who agree in general up to this point is to point to the necessity of concentration. The time was short and a beginning had to be made somewhere. Jesus was born a Jew among Jews and that was the natural place for him to begin. It is in accordance with his method to seek solid results in a limited field rather than to cover the widest possible area. In his teaching he contents himself with a few central and basic themes and does not try to legislate for every conceivable contingency. When his appeal to the nation fails and opposition is seen to be hardening, he seems to withdraw for the most part from public preaching and devote himself to the intensive training of a small band of real followers. Moreover, Israel had a history which peculiarly fitted her to be the recipient of a new revelation of God and there was a persistent if not always operative tradition that Israel was to be the agent through whom the nations should be brought to God. How much Jesus thought about the remoter consequences of what he was starting it is impossible to say. But it would be entirely reasonable for him to suppose that the best way to secure a world-wide recognition of the true God was to secure first a reformed and regenerated Israel and to conceive the latter as his immediate task.

I believe that there is a large element of truth in this view. Its weakness is that if this were the sole reason for the limitation of his ministry, we might rightly expect him to make explicit provision for future extension. That is what the evangelists thought and they supplied what they felt was required in the form of sayings of the risen Christ. But for us this is a pretty clear indication that the historical Jesus had *not* said what from their point of view he ought to have said. It is with the idea of offering a more completely satisfying explanation of this silence that I add one further consideration, and this is the only point wherein this paper pretends to novelty. It is not absolutely new, for the point is suggested by Friedrich in the article in the Kittel Wörterbuch above referred to, which was published last June (p. 726). But I have not seen it elsewhere and if there is anything in it at all, it needs developing and emphasizing. It is simply this: that the conversion of the Gentiles was an integral part of the eschatology of Jesus.

It must be admitted that after the Maccabean Revolt there was a reaction against universalism in Palestinian Judaism and the idea of an ultimate drawing in of the Gentiles may not have been dominant in the first century. On the whole the apocalypses paint a rather grim picture of the fate of the Gentiles when the Kingdom comes. But there is enough evidence to show that the other tendency had not perished. Deutero-Isaiah could not be entirely forgotten, and there it is plain that the eschatological consummation means the enthronement of God as King over the whole world. The Servant is to be a light for the Gentiles (Is. xlii. 1-6, xlix. 1-13, lx. 1-6). In Ps. xcvi which is full of the spirit of Deutero-Isaiah and which likewise celebrates the eschatological establishment of God's Kingdom, we read "Proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day, Declare his glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples—Say among the nations, Jahwe has begun to reign" (Ps. xcvi. 2-3, 10). The same idea is seen in Ps. xxii. 28, xlvi. 4, lxvii. 4, lxxvi. 9, cxxxviii. 4-5. Enoch x. 21 is evidence for the second century B. C. The famous passage Is. lii. 7 ff. referring to the Messenger, the *mbasser* who proclaims the good news of the Kingdom, is constantly cited and interpreted by the Rabbis (Theol. Wörterbuch zum N. T., pp. 713-714) and in at least one case, Pesikta Rabbati 36 (Billerbeck III 9c), it is expressly said that the Gentiles will come and serve the Messiah. The tractate Abodah Zarah quotes two well known Rabbis, Eliezer (90 A.D.) and Jose (150 A. D.), to the effect that in the days of the Messiah all the peoples of the world will become proselytes. The Scriptural basis is Zeph. iii. 9 (Abodah Zarah 24a, 3b. Billerbeck I 927). The tradition that the heathen would bring gifts to the Messiah is to be found in Pesikta 118b, Exodus Rabbah 35, Genesis Rabbah 78, and in other passages (Billerbeck I 84). The prophetic passage Is. xlii. 1-4 is by the Targum expressly interpreted of the Messiah.

This is surely sufficient to prove that there persisted a living tradition that at the time of the End there would be in some sense a drawing in of the Gentiles. That this belief was held by Jesus cannot be proved perhaps but we can be practically certain that he was familiar with and influenced by Deutero-Isaiah which is the starting-point of the idea, and it is thoroughly in accord with the spirit of his teach-

ing. It is therefore a reasonable assumption that the conversion of the nations formed a part of the eschatological scheme as it presented itself to his mind. Now if Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah (to my mind a settled question), then his coming meant the beginning of the End. The Kingdom was at hand, the powers of the New Age were already breaking through. No doubt the full and final consummation was not yet—certain things had to happen first—but the decisive step was taken and the rest would follow. And that rest included the bringing in of the Gentiles to join in the worship of God and acknowledge his sovereignty. There was therefore no need for him either to do or say anything about it himself. He and his immediate followers had a more pressing task. Not that he was hostile to the Gentiles or any less of a universalist than his spiritual ancestor Deutero-Isaiah. But he could afford to leave the sequel to God. Hence the silence which constituted our problem. Incidentally, though the question is not of major importance, on this view Mk. xiii. 10 and xiv. 9 may very well be genuine utterances of his. On this view also those Christians who a little later actually started out to convert the Gentiles, if they were not obeying his express command, were after all moved by his spirit and carrying out his intention.

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