

Jesus and the Non-Jews

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In St Matthew's Gospel x. 5f. Jesus is reported as opening his charge to the Twelve at the commencement of their mission with the words: 'Do not take the road that leads to Gentile districts, and do not enter any Samaritan city: go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Later in the same Gospel (xv. 24) he himself is represented as saying to the Syro-Phoenician woman who comes seeking his help for her sick child, 'The mission on which I have been sent is confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' It is possible that we should take in, along with these sayings, that in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. vii. 6), which runs:

Give not the holy thing to the dogs,
Nor cast your pearls before swine;
Lest they trample them underfoot,
And (the dogs) turn on you and rend you.

On the other side we have indications that the disciples are to bear witness before the Gentiles in Matt. x. 18 and xxiv. 14, while the Gospel ends with an explicit injunction to the Apostles from the Risen Lord to go and make disciples of all the Gentiles.

The early Fathers were aware of the difficulty created by these apparently contradictory instructions; and various ways of explaining the matter were attempted. One was that ever-present help in time of exegetical trouble, allegorical interpretation. The Gentile ways and Samaritan cities should be understood as figures representing such things as heresy and false doctrine or

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pagan behaviour. This line is taken by Hippolytus,¹ Clement of Alexandria,² Origen,³ Cyprian,⁴ and the *Didascalía*.⁵ The obvious objection to such an explanation is that, while it may serve for

¹ *Haer.* v. 23 (18).

² *Strom.* iii. 18. 107, 1 (Stählin, ii. 245).

³ *In Ioann.* T. xiii. 52 (51) p. 264 (Brooke, i. 307f.).

⁴ *Ep.* lxix. 6 (Hartel, i. 755f).

the things the Twelve are told not to do, it will not work when applied to the accompanying positive instructions. The command to avoid Gentiles and Samaritans is coupled with the command to go to the Israelites. This latter order was clearly meant to be obeyed, and was in fact obeyed, literally; and we must assume that the former was meant, and obeyed, literally too.

A more reasonable interpretation was that offered by Tertullian,⁶ that the limitations imposed were imposed on the Apostles alone, and were not meant to apply for all time. This point is taken still better by Eusebius⁷ who interpreted the text to mean that the matter is one of priorities: the first, but not the only, task of the Messiah is concerned with Israel. Other beneficiaries are not excluded; but their needs can only be met—and perhaps can best be met—when the mission to Israel has been completed. This last view has commended itself widely to many exegetes both ancient and modern. It is accepted, for example, by Calvin⁸ for whom the Messiah's first task is the mission to Israel. Similarly Grotius⁹ holds that the Jews were the first con-

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cern of Christ and that such benefits as he conferred on Gentiles were incidental. Throughout the ministry he was patiently awaiting the conversion of the Jewish people to himself, in order that through them the conversion of other races might be achieved. To this way of thinking belongs also the pithy remark of Bengel on the injunction to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: 'With these the Apostles would have quite enough to keep them busy.'¹⁰

I think it is fairly safe to assume as a working hypothesis that this is the best way of explaining the restrictions apparently laid by Jesus himself on his own mission and that of the Apostles. But if it is a good working hypothesis, it certainly does not leave us without further points to be raised and questions to be asked. First among them I should put the question: *What sort of mission is it that must be restricted in this way?*

When I began the serious study of the New Testament, what was known as the Liberal school of interpretation was still extremely influential; and many were ready to believe that the essence of Christianity lay in the proclamation of a few simple religious truths: the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value of the individual human soul. I would not even appear to suggest that these are not essential and vital elements of the Christian message. They are part of the very core of the Gospel. But if that is all there is to it; if the essential task of Jesus and his

⁵ Chaps. xiii and xxv (Conolly, 128, 212).

⁶ *De Fuiga in Persecutione*. 6 (ed. J. J. Thierry, pp. 68f., 169 ff.). Cf. *Praescr.* 8, where we have the idea that the messianic task begins with Israel, and the Gentile mission is to follow: 'Et ideo ad Israel loquebatur: Non sum, inquit, missus, nisi ad oves perditas domus Israel. Nondum canibus iactaret panem filiorum: nondum in viam nationum ire mandabat.' This is followed by a citation of Matt. xxviii. 19, and a reconciliation of the texts by way of first and second priority. See also Cramer, *Catena* i. 74f (attributed to Cyril), and Peter of Laodicea (ed. Heinrici) p. 105.

⁷ *Dem.* ix. 11. p. 445 (Heikel, p. 429); *Theoph.* iv. 15 (Gressmann, 188f).

⁸ *Harmonia* (ed. of 1572), p. 127.

⁹ *Annot.* (ed. of 1641) i. 193f.

¹⁰ *Gnomon* (ed. of 1855), p. 67. 'Cum his apostoli satis habebant negotii.'

entourage was simply to proclaim these central truths to men, then it becomes impossible to see why there should have been any restriction on the proclamation. One would have thought that such doctrines as these cannot be propagated too widely; and that Jesus the inspired teacher would have been only too happy to communicate his message to anyone—Jew, Gentile, or Samaritan—who would give him a hearing.

But it does not appear that the mission of Jesus and his disciples was understood at the time in this simple way as merely

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the propagation of a few central theological truths. On the contrary, we find that in the early Church one of the main topics for discussion, and indeed fierce controversy, was not how to give the widest publicity to simple truths about God, man, and the universe, but on what terms non-Jews might be admitted to membership of the Christian community. It was the incorporation of Gentiles into the Christian body, not the inculcation of Christian ideas into Gentile minds, that was the live issue in the middle of the first century.

Now everything that we know about the ministry of Jesus goes to show that the creation of the corporate body, called the Church or the New Israel or the Body of Christ or the Vine or the Bride of Christ—to mention only a few of its names, was not an idea that first occurred to the disciples after the Resurrection, but rather an essential part of what Professor J. W. Bowman has well called ‘the intention of Jesus’ from the first days of the Galilean Ministry. The fulfilment of that intention began from the moment when Jesus first said to individuals among the Galilean crowds, ‘You, come along with me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ The metaphor employed suggested that, having been caught themselves, they are to catch others. It is, I think, very significant that in a society where the highest importance was attached to the teaching of religious truths, and the highest respect paid to those who taught them, Jesus did not say to his disciples ‘I will make you teachers of men’ but ‘I will make you fishers of men.’ Whatever else the group that Christ gathered round himself was meant to be, it was not meant to be merely a society for the study of theology. It was to be a group that would make a direct impact on the life of the society round about it. It follows that if any restriction was imposed by Jesus on his followers, or on himself, it was a restriction on the scope and range of the group activities as a whole, and if that is so we must try to answer two questions : (1) what the group was in fact meant to do, and (2) why its activities were to be confined to a certain field ?

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A starting-point for the consideration of the first question is given in the text from which our inquiry began. The Twelve are sent specifically to ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’. In the immediate context in Matthew we read (ix. 35f.) that Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and infirmity. And when he saw the crowds, he was sorry for them because they had been harried till they were completely exhausted, like sheep that have no shepherd.’ In the account of

the feeding of the five thousand also we are told that when Jesus came ashore and saw the vast crowd, he was sorry for them 'because they were like sheep that had no shepherd'. Now it is very easy to give to such expressions as these a strictly religious and ethical interpretation, and to think of sheep without a shepherd as a congregation without a minister; or of lost sheep as men and women who have no proper standard of religious belief or code of conduct. And it is possible to find some little justification for such an interpretation in the Old Testament—Ps. cxix. 176 for example. But it is far more probable that the clue to the understanding of these expressions is to be found in such passages as Jeremiah xxiii. 1-8 and l. 4-7, where it is made clear that the 'lost sheep' are the people of Israel under the misrule of their kings and leaders, and that the 'sheep without a shepherd' are the same people of Israel without any leadership at all, good or bad.

The passage in Jeremiah xxiii says this (vv. 1-4):

Woe to the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be missing, saith the Lord.

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This is immediately followed by a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah (vv. 5f.):

Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David, a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and do wisely, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, 'The Lord our Righteousness'.

The five thousand men whom Jesus found waiting for him on the beach of the Sea of Galilee were 'sheep without a shepherd', a leaderless mob, a danger to themselves and everyone else; and the main preoccupation of our Lord in his dealings with them was first to avoid being rushed into the vacant command, and second to persuade the men to go quietly home. The story of the five thousand is a most striking, and instructive, illustration of the settled determination of Jesus not to allow his movement to become a nationalist uprising against the Roman occupation of the Holy Land. That decision was taken at the very outset of the ministry, and it remained unaltered and unalterable till the end.

This negative attitude towards some of the most fanatically cherished hopes and desires in first-century Jewry calls for a little more comment. I think it may be said that at this time there were, in the minds of Jews who thought about the matter, three main practical proposals for regulating the relations between Israel and Rome. There was, first, the policy of collaboration favoured by the upper ranks of the Temple hierarchy, the wealthy landowners, and the Herodian princes with

their supporters. These people had nothing to gain and everything to lose if there was a nationalist revolt against the Empire. Their position is clearly and concisely stated during the discussion in the Sanhedrin described in John xi. 47-50. They were prepared to take drastic steps in order to check any movement that threatened to damage their property or undermine their prestige. It was not that they had any love for the Romans, but simply that the Roman occupation was from their point of view the lesser evil. The second policy was that of what might perhaps be

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called 'non-violent non-co-operation'. It regarded the Roman Empire as an enemy and waited patiently for the day when God would make an end of it. But the initiative in this matter of deliverance was left to God; and until God chose to act, it was the duty of his people to go on tolerating the intolerable. The third and more revolutionary policy started from the conviction that any form of acknowledgement of a foreign ruler or submission to his authority was not merely unpatriotic but also irreligious. Acceptance of Roman rule was at once disloyalty to Israel and apostasy from God.

Any new group in Israel was almost bound, before long, to be faced with, the necessity of making its position clear on the issue of Jewish nationalism, versus Roman imperialism. Since the Roman policy was generally to be as tolerant as Roman interests allowed, considerable concessions were made to meet the Jewish conscience on religious issues. The main points of irritation were the imposition of Imperial taxes and the restrictions placed on the competence of Jewish courts in criminal cases involving the death penalty. On both issues Jesus was challenged. The question of taxation was raised in the well-known incident of the tribute-money (Mark xii. 13-17). The question whether it is permissible for a loyal Jew to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor is met by the request for a Roman coin. Some care is taken to establish the fact that it is a Roman coin. As such it is not, so to speak, legal tender for Temple dues; and it is part of the mechanism of the vast Imperial organization under which the Jews can all live in peace and security. It is perhaps not too much to suggest that 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's' means something like, 'If the *pax Romana* is worth having, it is worth paying for.' And that 'Render to God the things that are God's' means that after Caesar's lawful requirements have been duly met, the real claims of God on his people have not really been compromised at any essential point. However that may be, one thing is clear: that Jesus declines to back Jewish nationalism against Roman imperialism.

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The second challenge comes over the question of the competence of the Jewish courts in capital cases. It is the case of the woman taken in adultery (John vii. 53-viii. 11. I take it for granted that the story is no part of the true text of the Fourth Gospel; and, equally, I have no doubt that it is a piece of early and authentic Palestinian tradition about the ministry). The recent discussion by J. Jeremias¹¹ has, I think, gone far to answer the question of the competence of the Sanhedrin in capital cases in the negative. In the course of the discussion it emerges clearly that the object of

¹¹ ZNW 43 (1950/51) 145-50.

those who brought the woman before Jesus was to put him in a position where he must choose between the Jewish Law given in the Scriptures, which prescribed the death sentence, and the Roman regulations which did not allow any Jewish court to pass and execute such a sentence. In other words we have a similar attempt to that in Mark xii, an attempt to force Jesus into making a decision between Jewish nationalism and Roman imperialism. I have suggested¹² that the hitherto mysterious action of Jesus in stooping down and writing in the dust provides the clue to his answer. In effect he says: 'You are inviting me to challenge the Roman authorities and to usurp a right which they have reserved to themselves by dealing with a capital charge. So be it'. He then goes on to imitate the procedure of a *Roman* judge by pretending to write down the sentence. This was correct Roman criminal law practice: the judge first wrote his decision on his tablets, and then read it aloud. The sentence pronounced by Jesus was the death sentence, as required by the Mosaic law, but framed in such a way that it could not be carried out. Once more he refused to back Jewish nationalism against Roman imperialism. And he did something more, which is, I think, not irrelevant to present-day discussions about marriage, divorce, and second marriage: he gave a plain hint that the mechanical and rigorous administration of laws, however lofty the ideals they embody, is not, in the last resort,

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the best way of dealing with sinners as persons; particularly when the administrators themselves cannot be expected to have perfectly clean hands.

There is one more piece of evidence bearing upon the question of the attitude to be adopted by the Jewish people, Jesus and his followers included, towards their Roman overlords. It is the saying (Matt. v. 41) 'If anyone compels you to go one mile with him, go two.' As is well known this refers to the Roman practice of requisitioning transport whenever and wherever they needed it. The advice of Jesus in such cases is not merely to comply with the demands, but also to do it with a good grace; and, where all one's inclination would be to get rid of the unwelcome task as quickly as possible, to go on and do more than is required.

At this point we must take note of one more passage, which is, when rightly interpreted, of the highest value for our inquiry: I refer to the incident of the cleansing of the Temple (Mark xi. 15-19, with parallels in Matt. xxi. 12 f.; Luke xix. 45-48; John ii. 13-17). One is readily inclined to form a mental picture of a large market run for the financial benefit of a rapacious Temple-hierarchy, and then to construe the action of Jesus as a vigorous protest against the exploitation of public worship for private gain. The answer from the Jewish side is that the services that were provided by the money-changers and the sellers of doves were real services in that they saved the worshipper a lot of time and trouble; and that, therefore, any commission taken was genuinely earned. Moreover the Markan account makes it clear that the protest of Jesus covered more than the money-changers and the vendors of sacrificial animals: there was an expulsion of buyers and sellers in general from the sacred precincts; and there was a veto on the use of those precincts as a short cut for porters and messengers. When Mark's picture is studied closely the outer court of the Temple appears, not as occupied entirely by the Temple market but as a general bazaar, with

¹² ZNW 44 (1952/53) 255 f.

all kinds of people transacting business of all kinds, and with a constant coming and going of bearers of bags and baskets.

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Now the part of the Temple enclosure where these activities were in progress was the space known as the Court of the Gentiles, the only part of the sanctuary to which non-Jews had access. It was separated from the inner courts by the 'middle wall of partition' (τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ, Eph. ii. 14), bearing at regular intervals the notices forbidding Gentiles to pass beyond the barrier on pain of death. The upshot of the matter was that the only part of God's house which Gentiles were legally permitted to use to worship the God of Israel was in effect closed to them by the trade and commerce of the Israelites.

Once this is realized the texts quoted by Jesus take on a new significance. 'My house shall be called (=shall be) a house of prayer for all the Gentiles' (πάσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, Is. lvi. 7). How could God's word be effective in the existing circumstances? Only by stopping all this secularization, and making room in the Temple for the people whom God himself was ready to welcome there. (It is interesting to note that the words πάσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν are not present in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke. I am inclined to think that this is because these two Gospels are written after A.D. 70, when the Gentiles themselves had destroyed the house of prayer that was designed for their use.) The second text, from Jeremiah (vii. 11), is a strong saying, which describes the secularization of the Temple court in severe terms. It is, I think, significant that in Mark the texts are introduced by the statement ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς—in the course of his teaching he told them'. This suggests that these texts did not form a single impassioned utterance; but that they were the basis of teaching on the proper use of the Court of the Gentiles.

If this exegesis is anywhere near the truth we must think of the Cleansing of the Temple not as a demand for a more spiritual and less materialistic attitude on the part of the Temple clergy, but as a demand to make room in God's house for the Gentiles to come and worship him in peace and quietness.¹³

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If I have secured your agreement so far, I should sum the matter up by saying that the attitude of Jesus towards the Gentiles is not that of wishing to propagate some wholesome theological truths among them, much less to convert them to orthodox Judaism. One of his most scathing comments is on the proselytizing activities of the day (Matt. xxiii. 15).¹⁴ Even more remote from his purpose was any activity of a messianic-nationalist character.

¹³ See the admirable discussion by R. H. Lightfoot in *The Gospel Message of St Mark*, 62-9.

¹⁴ Cf. the remark of Father George Tyrrell quoted in M. D. Petre's *Life* (ii. 166): 'Christ only said one thing about proselytising, and it was not complimentary; but He said "Let your light so shine," etc.'

We may now go a step further and attempt to give a positive definition of the purpose of Jesus in forming a group of disciples. From what has already been said it is clear, I think, that Jesus desired to win men for the kingdom of God. This is in fact a twofold aim, since the truth is that the kingdom must do everything for a man before he can do anything for the kingdom. The two things are closely, inseparably linked. Thus it comes about that the manifestation of the kingdom is first of all in works of mercy, forgiveness, and help to those in distress. The most striking announcement of this fact is in Luke xi. 20. (parallel Matt. xii. 28): 'If I by the finger of God expel devils, then you may be sure that the kingdom of God has come upon you.' We might spend a lot of time on the discussion of demons, demon-possession, and exorcism. For our immediate purpose this is unnecessary; and we may paraphrase the saying: 'If I by God's power take men and women, set them on their feet, and enable them to live a life worth living, that is a clear indication that the kingdom of God is a present active reality among you.' That is the first thing. The second is that men and women who receive the kingdom in this way are at once under obligation to be at the disposal of its King for the furtherance of his good purposes. The beneficiaries must become benefactors, not in name (Luke xxii. 25ff.) merely, but in very fact, spending themselves and being entirely expendable in the service of their fellows. The point is

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that nobody who has once seen the kingdom of God from within can ever rest content while other people remain outside. 'Freely ye have received, freely give' (Matt. x. 8).

There is a further point that must be given a good deal more weight than is commonly allowed to it: that is, that the beneficent activities of the kingdom of God present among men are conceived in terms of personal encounter. One of the most striking features of the account of the ministry given in the Synoptic Gospels, is the amount of time and energy given by Jesus to the affairs of individuals. And when the disciples are sent out the directives given to them require that they should spend a major part of their time in personal service given to individuals in need of it. It is necessary to lay some stress on this personal service aspect of the ministry; because we are only too ready to suppose that the primary purpose of our Lord in the sphere of conduct was to promulgate a new code of ethics, simpler and better than the complex and burdensome system that had grown up through the scribal interpretations and applications of the Mosaic Law. We are all familiar with the proposition enunciated by many earnest Christian preachers and teachers, and echoed by not a few men of goodwill outside the Church, that if only the principles of the Sermon on the Mount were accepted and applied to human affairs, the world would be a very much better place. But the nagging questions remain: accepted—by whom? applied—by whom? and in what way? I do not find any evidence that Jesus seriously tried to get the principles of the Sermon on the Mount adopted as normative by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, or by the Roman Procurator of Judaea and Samaria, or by the surviving princes of the Herodian Dynasty. I find a good deal of evidence that he took the slower, and in the long run perhaps the more effective, way of living the principles out before individual men and women, and then accepting these men and women as apprentices to that way of living.

It is here that we find a way of answering our second main question: why the activities of Jesus and his followers were to be

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confined within the narrow limits set by the phrase 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. The great charm of promulgating codes of conduct or sketching plans for the social, political, and economic transformation of human life is that you need set no limits to the area within which the writ of your new code shall run, and the administration of your new plan operate. But if the enterprise is a *ministry*, operating through personal encounter between those who give and those who receive the service: then it can only be effective in the place where its servants are. If all such personal encounters are to be occasions for the meeting of the love and power of God with the actual needs of men and women one at a time, the enterprise must inevitably begin in a small way, and progress by the addition of those who have received to the ranks of those who give. It seems to me that Luke's account of the preaching of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth is a very adequate presentation of the enterprise that Jesus had in mind; and it is very significant that the text for the sermon is taken from Deutero-Isaiah (lxi. if.)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he had anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke iv. 18f. R.S.V.)

More than that I should not think it impossible that Jesus also had in mind that other passage of Deutero-Isaiah:

I said, 'I have laboured in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the Lord,
and my recompense with my God.'

And now the Lord says,

who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
And that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord,
and my God has become my strength—

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he says:

'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant

to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the preserved of Israel;
I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.'

(Isaiah xlix. 4-7. R.S.V.)

However that may be, the process of manifesting the kingdom of God through the messianic ministry begins within the borders of Israel, that is, in the place where Jesus himself, and later Jesus and his followers, are in direct contact with the needs of God's people. It begins there; but there is, in the early stages of the ministry, no reason why it should end there. It was natural that it should begin with Israel just because it was to Israel that one might look with the greatest confidence for an adequate response of faith and obedience to the love of God. If such a response is not forthcoming the idea of offering the benefits of the kingdom to the Gentiles is not excluded, as we may see from Luke iv. 24-27, and Mark xii. 9 as interpreted in Matt. xxi. 43. But there is nothing to suggest that Jesus himself ever abandoned the idea of finding in Israel those who would receive the kingdom themselves and then help to carry it to others; and it is significant that the few cases where Jesus confers benefits on those whom we have reason to think were non-Jews, tend rather to bear out the principle that the first offer and the first appeal should be made to Israel.

We may consider first the story of the Centurion of Capernaum. It seems likely that he was not a Jew, though stationed in Israelite territory. He makes his request in his own way; and the response of Jesus is very significant, 'Not even in Israel have I found such faith.' The implication of the statement is that the pagan centurion has made the kind of response to the ministry of Jesus that Jesus himself was looking for, a response which had not been forthcoming to the same degree in the place where one would have expected to find it—in Israel. It is to be noted that

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the proper response is faith, that is, recognition of, and confident reliance upon, the gracious power of God manifested in the works of Jesus. But just because he is and remains a pagan, just because he is, after the healing of his servant, still under the orders of a foreign potentate, he cannot be taken into that kind of service of the kingdom to which Jews may be called. Despite the fact that he has this remarkable faith, he does not receive the command, 'Follow me'.

A more difficult problem is set by the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark vii. 24-31). Here we are confronted by what looks like unwillingness on the part of Jesus to respond to a case of human need and distress, an unwillingness, moreover, which is expressed in what appear to us to be harsh and unsympathetic terms. I think, however, that there are other aspects of the incident, that we ought to consider before we begin to accuse Jesus of lack of sympathy or want of courtesy. The first is this matter of faith, which has already been noted as a central factor in the story of the centurion. We make a great mistake if we think of Jesus as someone who could go round dispensing a miraculous power to heal as a doctor might dispense doses of the latest wonder-drug. We learn more than once that his power was closely bound up with the faith of the people whom he was called to help. But there is nothing to show that this woman has any such

faith: for her Jesus is the possessor of some strange magical power which can be useful to her and her stricken child. Once the cure is effected the incident will be closed: there will be no question of her being brought into the work of the kingdom. The remark about the children's food and the dogs is then a test, and a severe test. The woman gives the only possible answer: it is completely sincere and completely right. She is not one of the chosen people; she does not aspire to be one. She has no idea of becoming a disciple of Jesus in the full sense, any more than the centurion of Capernaum. She relies entirely on her own need and on the fact that no true household can exist unless it provides for more than its own children. That flash of in-

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sight secures for her what she asks; and she goes back to her pagan environment in triumph.

But cases like these are exceptions. They show that Jesus would respond to anyone who came to him in trouble, if the suppliant showed any glimmering of living faith. The real constructive work of the ministry had to be done elsewhere in building up within Israel a body of men and women who were set free from chauvinistic nationalism, from the ambition to impose Israelite ideals of faith and conduct on the rest of the world by force of arms; men and women set free from spiritual pride with its condescending readiness to instruct lesser breeds in the elements of true religion and sound morality; men and women who had learned in 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. I think 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.

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