

there would have been good reason for all of them to have mentioned the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Jerusalem as *fulfilled* prophecy, and yet all speak as if they were written prior to these catastrophic events. Moreover, it would seem very likely that those living within a decade or so of the ascension would want to know what Jesus said and did, and there would have been good grounds for putting this in writing. There is, in addition, a neglected argument which splits wide open a good number of widely-held hypotheses. If Acts is the second volume of a two-volume work of which Luke is the first (as is widely accepted), then the date of Luke cannot be later than that of Acts. But Acts appears to be written in the middle sixties while Paul was still alive. From this it follows that Luke would have been written either in the sixties or even in the fifties and if Mark was among the writings mentioned by Luke among his sources at the beginning, the second Gospel might well have been written within twenty years of the resurrection. (On this see Adolf Harnack, *The Date of the Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels*, ET, 1911.)

If these points are valid, there is certainly no room for all the developments posited by Form Criticism. It makes feasible the view that the Gospels are based upon first-hand accounts. It is a reminder that we should look again more seriously at the external evidence

for the traditional views of authorship of the Gospels.

This short survey of a massive subject has had to be arbitrary. The contribution of the Scandinavian scholars like H. Riesenfeld and B. Gerhardsson and their views on the solid oral tradition behind the Gospels have been deliberately excluded, since they were discussed at some length in the previous issue of this *Bulletin*. Karl Barth's approach to Christology has also been omitted deliberately as it would take too long to deal with it adequately. I have attempted to examine this in more detail in a study of *Karl Barth and the Christian Message* which is to be published by the Tyndale Press in the not-too-distant future.

Sometimes it is said that faith does not depend upon historical scholarship. The observation is a half-truth. In the last analysis faith is a gift of God which cannot be disturbed by changes of academic fashion. On the other hand, the Christian revelation centres around what Christ did in time and space. It is supremely historical. Whilst it transcends historical techniques, it does not exclude historical investigation. To ignore historical questions would be intellectual suicide. To examine in depth the historical character of the Christian revelation and the Gospels which attest it can only lead to a deeper appreciation of the gospel.

Note: A select bibliography will be found at the end of the second article.

The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith

2 JESUS AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

By THE REV. R. E. NIXON MA, *Senior Tutor of St. John's College, Durham.*

THE DEBATE concerning the relationship of the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith must seem, to most of those who have followed it, to be more a matter

of philosophy than of exegesis. Again and again one can see how a position previously reached is used as the starting-point for an approach to the New Testament texts. The Synoptic Gospels, however, still provide the battlefield where the infantry is engaged, even if the decisive war is being fought in the air above. This is so because

the natural place for the unsuspecting reader to turn, in order to find out what historical facts there are about Jesus, is to the Gospels which purport to tell some of those facts; and it is to the Synoptics in particular that he will turn, because there is less immediate evidence that these writers have an eye on the theological significance of the events all the time in the way that St John seems to have. And of course the original quest for the historical Jesus concentrated mainly on St Mark as the basic, simple, unadorned tale out of which the other complications grew. While there has, in some quarters, been a re-assessment of the historical importance of the Fourth Gospel, the issues are still found to be most clearly shown in the way that the first three are handled. It will be the purpose of this article to look briefly, with the help of a number of useful books and articles, at some of the more important positions taken up today concerning Form Criticism, the role of the individual evangelists and two of the particular historical issues in the Gospels.

Form Criticism

Form Criticism is a discipline which has been applied to the study of a wide range of literature both inside and outside the Bible. It has received most of its fame (or notoriety) from its use in the study of the Synoptic Gospels and particularly in the study of St Mark. It has often enough been pointed out that the real trouble has been that Form Critics like Bultmann and Dibelius have stepped beyond the proper limits of their method and allowed a neutral literary classification to pass straight into a hostile historical judgment. The famous words of T. W. Manson sum this up well enough: 'A paragraph of Mark is not a penny the better or the worse as historical evidence for being labelled, "Apothegm" or "Pronouncement Story" or "Paradigm"' (*Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, p. 5). For another vigorous rebuttal of the claims of the more extreme Form Critics see also C. S. C. Williams' chapter on the subject in the second edition of McNeile's *Introduction to the New Testament*.

Bultmann and his colleagues, however, were not interested in any quest for the historical Jesus, which they regarded as being both impossible and in any event unnecessary. But as Emil Brunner has said, 'Bultmann's shaky throne gets more shaky day by day',

and we have moved into the post-Bultmannian phase. This can be dated to Ernst Käsemann's paper of 1953 entitled 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus'. Many of Bultmann's former pupils have joined in the revolt, among them especially Ernst Fuchs and Günther Bornkamm. It should not be supposed, however, that the "New Quest" is on the same lines as the old and that those undertaking it will necessarily have a high regard for the historical value of the Synoptics. Käsemann says, 'We wish to characterize the embarrassment of critical research only in a few rough lines: the historical reliability of the synoptic tradition has become doubtful all along the line; yet for working out the authentic material going back to Jesus we are largely lacking in an essential presupposition, namely a survey of the earliest stage of the primitive church, and are almost completely lacking in sufficient and valid criteria. Only in one single case do we have relatively firm ground under our feet, namely when for some reason a tradition can neither be derived from Judaism nor attributed to primitive Christianity, and especially when Jewish Christianity has toned down or bent the material it received as too daring' (*ZTK*, LI, 1954, p. 144).

Günther Bornkamm, whose book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, is one of the most important so far to come from the post-Bultmannian school, takes a somewhat more optimistic view: 'The Gospels justify neither resignation nor scepticism. Rather they bring before our eyes, in very different fashion from what is customary in chronicles and presentations of history, the historical person of Jesus with the utmost vividness. Quite clearly what the Gospels report concerning the message, the deeds and the history of Jesus is still distinguished by an authenticity, a freshness and a distinctiveness not in any way effaced by the church's Easter faith. These features point us directly to the earthly figure of Jesus' (*op. cit.*, p. 24). Nevertheless Bornkamm still follows the sceptical attitude of many Form Critics towards the Marcan outline, as is shown by the following quotation: '... At the beginning of the tradition we find, not a historical sequence of events, but the individual pericope — the individual parable, the individual saying or story, which only in the Gospels, often in very different ways, is given its setting and, with a very modest editing, arranged coherently. . . . This self-sufficient

character of each individual passage, and the typical style of the reports . . . , show how little interest the tradition has in presenting them in a proper historical, chronological sense. . . . There can be no doubt that the Gospel tradition was thus closely related to the Church's life, had grown out of it and was designed for it' (*ibid.*, p. 218). We are still a long way in German theological thinking from, for instance, Manson's modest attempt to shape the ministry of Jesus round Peter's confession or Dodd's idea of Mark as an expansion of the historical section of the kerygma.

One of the relatively few British scholars to keep up with the 'New Questers' is R. H. Fuller, who now works in America. He makes the following remarkable assertions. Form Criticism 'provides us with two criteria to help us to decide whether a saying of Jesus is authentic. (1) If it reflects the faith of the church after the resurrection, it must be regarded as a creation of the church, rather than an authentic saying of Jesus. (2) If there is a parallel saying attributed to a Rabbi, it must be held as a Jewish tradition which has erroneously been attributed to Jesus' (*Interpreting the Miracles*, pp. 26f.). T. W. Manson pertinently remarked, 'Of any story or teaching we may ask concerning its "*Sitz im Leben*" — is it a "*Sitz im Leben Jesus*" or a "*Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche*"?' It is sometimes overlooked that an affirmative answer to the latter alternative does not automatically carry with it a negative answer to the former' (ET, LIII, 1941-2, p. 249). In fact there is relatively little that is new in the issues concerning Form Criticism, and the more significant advances have been made in the study of the evangelists as themselves theologians and interpreters in their own right. It is to them that we must now turn.

St Mark

The Second Gospel is still regarded by the great majority of scholars as the one to have been written first. Indeed this might almost be said to be the one 'assured result' of 130 years of Synoptic criticism, though the detailed relationship of Matthew and Mark has been explained in a variety of ways by different scholars in recent years. (For most scholars the concept of Q still stands, though there is much uncertainty about its shape and many now regard it as a

'layer of tradition' rather than as a single document.) Important recent studies include W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus* (1959), and James M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (1957). In this country D. E. Nineham's Pelican Commentary represents the fullest expression of a theological position which seeks to combine an adherence to Bultmannian Form Criticism on the one hand and to the great emphasis on symbolism which is characteristic of R. H. Lightfoot and A. M. Farrer on the other. That this commentary is important but at the moment uncharacteristic of British New Testament scholarship may perhaps be suggested by its ignoring the thorough and judicious commentary of C. E. B. Cranfield and by the fact that A. T. Hanson has devoted a whole chapter in *Vindications* to a criticism of Nineham's position. Hanson suggests that Nineham has an unexamined assumption that 'virtually no trustworthy historical information can have survived the period of oral transmission' (Hanson's italics). 'We have passed unconsciously,' he writes, 'from the principle that not every detail in Mark's Gospel is necessarily historical to the conclusion that virtually no detail can possibly be historical. The desire to find some theological significance in every detail supplied by Mark leads imperceptibly into the conclusion that Mark (or his predecessors) have invented the detail. From this comes the habit of looking around for reasons why any apparently historical detail or incident should have been invented' (*op. cit.*, pp. 75f.). Hanson suggests that Nineham's position, as shown by a number of recent articles of his, could be summed up as: '(a) We have enough historical knowledge of Jesus for our purpose as Christians. (b) We must trust the Church for the rest.' He believes that Nineham does not in fact work out logically the conclusions which should stem from his premises, and despite his presuppositions, he ends with something like the traditional Christology.

One of the most important issues in the criticism of St. Mark's Gospel is that of the Messianic Secret. Bultmann followed Wrede in stating that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah nor was ever recognized as such during His earthly life. Most British scholars have tended to treat the Messianic Secret as historical. The post-Bultmannian scholars reject this, because they find it not in the pre-Markan pericopes but in

the Marcan redactions. 'It serves rather to present in positive terms a concept of revelation conceived in terms of paradox. It is significant that Mark, who is certainly the creator of the theory, was most concerned to emphasize the motif of secrecy just where, in the pre-Markan stage, the material had been impregnated most strongly with Christology, e.g., in the Transfiguration narrative (Mark 9: 9)' (H. Conzelmann, art. 'Jesus Christus' in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, III, third ed.). R. H. Fuller comments: 'We might almost say that the secrecy motif, far from being designed to heighten the Christology, actually tones it down. . . . In the last resort — and here the British scholars are ultimately right — the Messianic Secret is historical, though not in the sense in which they mean it. It is historical in the sense that this is precisely the meaning of the history of Jesus, seen in the light of the resurrection' (*The New Testament in Current Study*, p. 95).

We may welcome the increased emphasis on Mark as a theologian. We may feel that to study the ways in which he handles his material, in selection, omission and arrangement, gives us a valuable insight into the way in which the early church understood the Gospel. We may rejoice that there seems no likelihood of a return to the idea of St Mark as a rather naïve chronicler of all that he knew. But as C. F. D. Moule points out in his article 'The Intention of the Evangelists', (*New Testament Essays*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, 1959), Mark has not done a great deal of theologizing in his Gospel: 'It probably (if we accept a well supported reading in 1.1) twice directly designates Jesus Son of God — 1.1, 13. 32; otherwise only indirectly — 3.11, 5.7 (demoniacs), 14. 61 (the high priest — but perhaps the phrase is only messianic), 15. 39 (the centurion), and 1.11, 9. 7 (the divine voice at the baptism and transfiguration). It once (but only by implication) represents him as claiming the title Lord — 12.36; it never calls him Saviour; it only twice alludes to his death as redemptive — 10.45, 14.24. It does not get anywhere near suggesting the possibility of disciples becoming more than disciples so as to be living members incorporated in his body. It knows about dying so as to live (8.35), but this is by following Christ, that is, by discipleship, rather than by membership, in the post-resurrection manner. Seldom (as is familiar to all students of the Gospels) is there any allusion to the

Holy Spirit, and then not in any characteristically Christian sense, but only in ways in which a devout Jew might use it' (p. 171).

Professor Moule is sure that the evangelists were interested in the facts. We must continue to pose the question which has often been put before to those who are sceptical: 'If the second generation was interested in the facts would not the first generation be also? Can we therefore not assume that there will be a great deal of eyewitness material lying close to the surface of St. Mark's Gospel?' We may feel that H. E. W. Turner is justified in his comment: 'J. M. Robinson can speak of "the intention of Mark to 'historicize' the oral tradition". It also displays a sound historical instinct as well. St Mark displays a rare instinct for historical verisimilitude in working it out, and stands close enough to the eye-witness and oral traditions to make his attempt feasible. Yet his scaffolding is not that of neutral or secular time, but the context of God's action in history' (*Historicity and the Gospels*, p. 97).

St Matthew

'The new concern for the evangelists as creative writers,' claims Fuller, 'seems to have begun with Matthew, and outside the post-Bultmannian school, in the books by G. D. Kilpatrick and Krister Stendahl'. (Kilpatrick's particular emphasis in *The Origins of the Gospel according to St Matthew* (1946) was on the liturgical origin and purpose of this Gospel, while Stendahl's *The School of St Matthew* (1954) claimed that it was the product of a Christian 'school', intended for use in study and instruction. There seems more plausibility in the latter's work than in the former's though Stendahl has probably overstated his case.) 'The strictly post-Bultmannian study of Matthew,' Fuller goes on, 'opened with Günther Bornkamm's essay in the *Dodd Festschrift*' (*op. cit.*, pp. 95f.). In his essay in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology* (ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube, 1954), Bornkamm deals with three main themes of the first evangelist. First, his *Christology*, in which Jesus is shown to be the humiliated king with a mission on earth to Israel and after the resurrection a world-wide mission of teaching. Then Matthew's doctrine of the *church* presents Jesus as bringing an authentic exposition of the Mosaic law to his ecclesia. Finally Matthew's *eschatology* shows that there

is a period of the church's mission and there is special emphasis on the delay in the Parousia and the organization of the church in preparation for the end. The church is now the subject of judgment.

The most important recent book on this Gospel is that by G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (ET, 1963). It does not provide a systematic treatment of the historical side of Matthew, but looks at various aspects of his approach. Bornkamm's essay is an expansion of that mentioned above. Barth deals with Matthew's understanding of the Law, and Held deals with Matthew as interpreter of the miracle stories. Held concludes: 'If the section of instruction for the disciples in Mark (8.27-10.52) presupposes the situation of the Church after Easter and Pentecost . . . there is no occasion for surprise that Matthew, too, gives the miracle stories a slant in the direction of this situation, albeit in a very different way. One may regret this process of "Christianisation" of the material because it conceals the original form of the tradition, but in the light of the nature of the early Christian tradition it is not only understandable but necessary. There is no tradition without interpretation.' He then adds, 'If there is no tradition without interpretation, the interpretation remains bound nevertheless to the tradition' (p. 297ff.).

J. C. Fenton's commentary in the Pelican series takes up a number of the positions adopted by R. H. Lightfoot and A. M. Farrer, and is full of interesting theological and symbolic insights (some of which he himself admits are rather tenuous), while tending to discount the value of Matthew's historical interests. Indeed, it would be true to say that there are few scholars who do not find difficulties concerning Matthew's special material with its added emphasis on the miraculous and on futurist eschatology. To some its relationship to Mark creates more problems than does that of John, but it may be that some latter-day Robinson will be able to write of 'The New Look on the First Gospel'.

St Luke

'It would not be far wrong,' asserts C. K. Barrett, 'to say that the focus of New Testament studies is now moving to the Lucan writings. The Fourth Gospel raised, in one form, the problem which is always pressed upon the Christian

thinker by the nature of his subject, namely that of the relation between history and theology. It is the same ultimate problem that the Lucan writings raise, though they raise it in a different way' (*Luke the Historian in Recent Study*, p. 50). The most important single contribution to this study in recent years has been H. Conzelmann's *The Theology of St Luke* (ET, 1960). This scholar rejects any idea of proto-Luke, thus laying greater stress on the contribution of the evangelist himself. 'His attribution of so much to the creative activity of the evangelist,' writes Fuller (*op. cit.*, pp. 99f.), 'seems on the one hand to result in a sceptical view of the Gospel as a source for the history of Jesus, but it does serve on the other hand to make Luke stand out as one of the creative theologians of the New Testament. It is a reaction against older views which regarded him either as a scissors and paste redactor (source criticism) or as a mere collector of oral tradition (form criticism).'

Conzelmann's original title for his work was *Die Mitte der Zeit* (*The Middle of Time*) and his emphasis is on the three great periods of time with which Luke deals. There is the period of Israel, the period of the life of Jesus and the period of the church. St Luke's Gospel deals with the middle period. Conzelmann's work has a lot of new and important insights, but is inclined to force some of its points of view upon a reluctant text, and its symbolic geography, like that of R. H. Lightfoot, does not always carry conviction. As far as Acts is concerned, R. R. Williams quotes a letter by C. H. Dodd which says, 'I suspect we shall have to give Acts over, so to speak, to Conzelmann' (*Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament*, p. 150). He leads on to the historical scepticism of E. Haenchen's *Apostelgeschichte* (1959) and the typological fantasies of M. D. Goulder's *Type and History in Acts* (1964).

Barrett rejects as a false alternative the suggestion that we must choose between basing our appraisal of Luke on historical or on kerygmatic grounds. He does not think that Luke would have understood the distinction. He sees rather a variety of motives which led him to take up his pen. He believes that the evangelist made an honest attempt to tell the story of what happened, though in many cases he was a good way removed from the facts, and that he wrote for the church in the age in which he himself

lived to answer some of the problems which it faced.

Two Problems

Two of the issues which are bound to arise in any discussion about the historicity of the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels are miracles and the supreme miracle — the resurrection. On the subject of miracles in general scholars are divided, but R. H. Fuller's view (*Interpreting the Miracles*) is perhaps a representative one. He tries to avoid an *a priori* position that Jesus did or did not perform miracles. After examining the evidence, he concludes that Jesus did do some and 'if we find the results of historical criticism conflict with the modern scientific world view we ought in principle to be ready to widen our world view to make room for those results' (p. 20). He finds nature miracles difficult and affirms that 'while the tradition that Jesus did perform exorcisms and healings (which may also have been exorcisms originally) is very strong, we can never be certain of the authenticity of any actual miracle story in the Gospels. While a few of them may rest upon specific memory, most of them have probably been shaped out of generalized memories' (*ibid.*, p. 39). A. R. C. Leaney on the other hand states that for the evangelists 'the miracles are signs not of divinity (they believed that on the basis of the resurrection) but of historicity' (*Vindications*, p. 123).

Leaney, in the same chapter, goes on to take Bornkamm and Fuchs to task over their views of the resurrection. He remarks concerning the disciples, that 'if we ask them through the proxy of writings dependent upon them, what caused this change, they do not answer, "the gradual conviction that we were marked out by death but the crucified and buried one was alive" (Bornkamm's phrase) but "Jesus who was dead appeared to some of us alive after his death and the rest of us believed their witness"' (*ibid.*, p.108). Of Fuchs he says, 'he believes something far more sceptical about the Resurrection than that the history has been driven into the

background. Once more this seems to be because of his existential preoccupation' (*ibid.*, p. 113).

Conclusion

We may conclude that Form Criticism still has a considerable influence in the approach to the Synoptic Gospels, and that the use which is made of it depends largely on the assumptions of those who employ it; that there are still many New Testament scholars with basically sceptical presuppositions; that some of these views are making headway in this country though they are being vigorously combated; that most scholars now accept that there is at last some connection between the Jesus of history as He is shown in the Synoptic Gospels and the Christ of faith. We may welcome the move away from the aridities of detailed Source Criticism to the oases (which are too often mirages in the hands of the extreme typologists provided by the emphasis on the evangelists as creative theologians. We may rejoice that the old liberalism has largely disappeared.

The current issues may be clarified thus. The dust-jacket of Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth* bears the words 'Certainly faith cannot and should not be dependent on the change and uncertainty of historical research'. Turner, on the other hand, concludes that while the nineteenth-century critics concentrated on the life and teaching of Jesus to the exclusion of the part of the evangelists and the fact of the risen Christ, those of the twentieth century have tended to do just the opposite. 'Any approach to the Gospels,' he writes, 'which regards the life and teaching of our Lord as of less significance than other aspects under which the Gospels can be studied is in real danger not only of doing substantial injustice to the Gospels themselves, but also of failing to give adequate support and anchorage in historical fact to the very interests which they are most concerned to expound and defend' (*Historicity and the Gospels*, pp. 107f.). That is roughly the battle-line. We should be involved in the fighting.

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The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith

3 HISTORY AND THE FOURTH GOSPEL

By LEON MORRIS BSC MTH PHD, *Principal, Ridley College, Melbourne.*

I IMAGINE that the principal difficulty most people see in accepting the Fourth Gospel as a reliable historical document arises from the marked difference between the Synoptic and the Johannine portraits of Jesus. If Jesus was as the Synoptists depict Him, men reason, then He could not have been as St John portrays Him. Or, in the words of F. C. Burkitt, 'It is quite inconceivable that the historical Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels could have argued and quibbled with opponents, as He is represented to have done in the Fourth Gospel.'¹ Burkitt not only stresses the difference but in this way brings out strongly his preference for the Synoptic picture. He does not find the Jesus of St John an attractive figure.

It is a pity that Burkitt chose to write these words. 'Quibbled' is a loaded word and unworthy of this great scholar. The reality behind his statement is not that Jesus adopted questionable methods, but that He could and did meet His opponents on their own ground. Jewish scholars have not infrequently recognized the essential Jewishness of this Gospel. Thus Israel Abrahams can say, 'My own general impression without asserting an early date for the Fourth Gospel is that that Gospel enshrines a genuine tradition of an aspect of Jesus' teaching which has not found a place in the Synoptics', and

he refers to 'the Fourth Gospel's close acquaintance with Hebraic traditions'.² With Burkitt, we may not like this. But it is idle to deny that the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel fits into the Jewish environment of the day. He may not fit into our notions of what the Christ of God should be, but that is another matter.

R. V. G. Tasker puts some stress on this as he reminds us that it is not Jesus as He was that is contradicted by the Fourth Gospel, but Jesus as the liberals saw Him: 'It is very true that the portrait of the Johannine Christ does not at all square with the portrait that has often been drawn of Him by liberal theologians. But we have to remember that Jesus was put to death not because He was inoffensive, but because He struck at the roots of the pride, the prejudices, and the self-satisfaction of mankind.'³ It simply will not do to say that we know from the Synoptists what Jesus was like and that therefore He could not have been as John depicts Him. The fact is that it is easy to construct from the Synoptists, by a selective use of the materials (and of the critical imagination!), a portrait of Jesus which is incompatible with John's picture. But whether we are justified in doing so is another matter.

The Johannine portrait is life-like. It is true that it contains some features not in the Synoptic picture, but we cannot without further ado put this down to the evangelist's imagination. At the very least it contains an authentic Jewishness.