

## PAUL AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS<sup>1</sup>

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THE subject of Paul and the historical Jesus is one that has been touched upon in previous lectures delivered by me in this Library. Some reference was made to it eleven years ago in a lecture entitled "When is a gospel not a gospel?"<sup>2</sup> and I returned to it in the last of my lectures on "Galatian Problems", delivered here twelve months ago.<sup>3</sup> It therefore seems appropriate to devote a complete lecture to it, without undue repetition of what has been said before.

When I speak of Paul, I confine myself to his letters. There are, of course, references to the historical Jesus in the Pauline speeches in Acts, but to adduce them in evidence would involve a discussion of critical prolegomena which must be reserved for another occasion. When I speak of the historical Jesus, I do not try to distinguish, as some present-day scholars do, between Jesus as he really was and what can be known of Jesus by means of the scientific methods of the historian.<sup>4</sup> Such a distinction could not have occurred to Paul. Our question is rather: what evidence is there for Paul's knowledge of, or interest in, the life and teaching of Jesus on earth, up to and including his crucifixion?

### I. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS

Paul is our earliest literary authority for the historical Jesus. He does not tell us much about him, in comparison with what we can learn from the Gospels, but he tells us a little more than that Jesus was born, lived and died. Jesus, he says, was a descendant of Abraham (Galatians iii. 16) and David (Romans

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library on Wednesday, the 14th of November 1973.

<sup>2</sup> BULLETIN, xlv (1962-3), 319-39.

<sup>3</sup> BULLETIN, lv (1972-3), 264-84.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1959), pp. 26 ff.

i. 3), who lived under the Jewish law (Galatians iv. 4); he was betrayed, and on the night of his betrayal instituted a memorial meal of bread and wine (1 Corinthians xi. 23-25); he endured death by crucifixion (Galatians iii. 1, etc.), a Roman method of execution, although Jewish authorities shared some degree of responsibility for his death (1 Thessalonians ii. 15); he was buried, rose the third day, and was thereafter seen alive on several occasions by eyewitnesses varying in number (from one occasion to another) between one by himself and five hundred together, the majority of whom were alive to attest the fact twenty-five years later (1 Corinthians xv. 4-8).

Paul knows of the apostles of Jesus, of whom Cephas (Peter) and John are mentioned by name as "pillars" of the Jerusalem church fifteen to twenty years after his death, and of his brothers, of whom James is similarly mentioned as a "pillar" (Galatians ii. 9; cf. i. 19). He knows that many of those apostles and brothers were married men; Cephas (Peter) is specially named in this regard (1 Corinthians ix. 5), and this provides an incidental point of agreement with the gospel story of Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Mark i. 30 f.). On occasion he quotes sayings of Jesus, and at some of these we shall look more closely.

Even where he does not quote actual sayings of Jesus, he shows himself well acquainted with the substance of many of them. We have only to compare the ethical section of the Epistle to the Romans (xii. 1-xv. 7), where Paul sets out the practical implications of the gospel in the lives of believers, with the Sermon on the Mount, to see how thoroughly imbued the apostle was with his Master's teaching. Moreover, there and elsewhere Paul's chief argument in his ethical instruction is the example of Jesus himself. And the character of Jesus as Paul understood it is consistent with the character of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels. When Paul speaks of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians x. 1) we recall the claim of the Matthaean Jesus to be "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew xi. 29). The self-denying Jesus of the Gospels is the one of whom Paul says that "Christ did not please himself" (Romans xv. 3); and just as the Jesus of the Gospels called on his followers

to deny themselves, so the apostle insists that it is our duty as followers of Christ "to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans xv. 1). When Paul invites his Philippian friends to reproduce among themselves the mind which was in "Christ Jesus", who took "the form of a slave" (Philippians ii. 5-7), we may think of him who, according to Luke, said to his disciples at the Last Supper, "I am among you as the servant" (Luke xxii. 27), and who on the same occasion, according to John, performed the humble service of washing their feet (John xiii. 3 ff.).

In short, what Paul has to say of the life and teaching of the historical Jesus agrees, so far as it goes, with the outline preserved elsewhere in the New Testament and particularly in the four Gospels. Paul is at pains to insist that the gospel which he preaches rests on the same factual basis as that preached by the other apostles (1 Corinthians xv. 11)—a claim the more noteworthy because he was a companion neither of the earthly Jesus nor of the original apostles, and vigorously asserts his independence of the latter (Galatians i. 11 ff.; ii. 6).

At the same time, there are some of the most familiar facts about Jesus that we could never have learned from Paul's letters: that he habitually taught in parables, that he healed the sick and performed other "signs". From those letters we should know nothing of his baptism and temptation, of his Galilean ministry, of the turning-point at Caesarea Philippi, of the transfiguration or of the last journey to Jerusalem. While we find clear and repeated references in them to Jesus' crucifixion, we should know nothing from them of the events which led up to it.

## II. THE NEW PERSPECTIVE

That the Christ-event marked an epoch in the history of salvation is common ground to Paul and the Evangelists. According to Mark, Jesus inaugurated his Galilean ministry with the announcement: "The appointed time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near" (Mark i. 15). According to Paul, "when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son . . . so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians iv. 4 f.). The substance of the two announcements is the same,

but there is a change of perspective; Good Friday and Easter Day have intervened, and the original Preacher has become the Preached One.<sup>1</sup> This change of perspective is anticipated in Jesus' own teaching. While the kingdom of God had drawn near in his ministry, it had not been unleashed in its fulness. Until Jesus underwent the "baptism" of his passion, he was conscious of restrictions (Luke xii. 50). With the passion and triumph of the Son of Man, however, those restrictions would be removed and, as he told his hearers on one occasion, some of them would live to see "the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1).

For Paul, this coming with power is an accomplished fact. Jesus has been "designated Son of God *with power*, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans i. 4). The divine power which raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in his followers, conveyed to them by his indwelling Spirit; the same indwelling Spirit provides the assurance that the work of renewal, so well begun, will be successfully consummated. Hostile spiritual forces, already disabled, must be destroyed; by the destruction of death, the last of those forces, the coming age of resurrection glory will be achieved (1 Corinthians xv. 25 f.), but its blessings are enjoyed here and now through the Spirit by those who have experienced faith-union with Christ (2 Corinthians v. 5). "Therefore", says Paul, "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians v. 17).

This change of perspective, then, can be viewed in two ways. Absolutely, it can be dated in terms of world-history, around A.D. 30; empirically, it takes place whenever a man or woman comes to be "in Christ". And when it takes place thus empirically, one's whole outlook is revolutionized. "Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (E.T., London, 1931), p. 113. In Jesus and Paul we have to distinguish not (as Martin Buber put it in the title of one of his books) *Two Types of Faith* (E.T., London, 1951) but two *ages* of faith.

These words of 2 Corinthians v. 16 (quoted here from the Revised Version because of its literal rendering of *κατὰ σάρκα* by "after the flesh") have played a crucial part in much discussion of Paul's relation and attitude to Jesus. What is meant by this knowledge of Christ "after the flesh", which for Paul and his fellow-Christians is now a thing of the past?

Few, if any, nowadays take the line followed at the beginning of this century by Johannes Weiss among others. He thought that Paul's language reflected "the impression received by direct personal acquaintance", that Paul had most probably seen and heard Jesus in Jerusalem during Holy Week and that it is this kind of knowledge that Paul was disparaging by contrast with the new knowledge that he had now received "according to the Spirit".<sup>1</sup>

Whether Paul ever did see or hear Jesus before the crucifixion is not the question at issue.<sup>2</sup> The question at issue is whether his language in 2 Corinthians v. 16 could have any reference to such seeing or hearing, and it is best answered in Rudolf Bultmann's words: "that he even saw Jesus and was impressed by him . . . is to be read out of 2 Cor. v. 16 only by fantasy."<sup>3</sup> But Professor Bultmann's own interpretation of the text can be read out of it only if it be first read into it. For him, the knowledge of Christ "after the flesh" which Paul depreciates is much the same thing as an interest in the historical Jesus: "it is illegitimate to go behind the kerygma, using it as a 'source', in order to reconstruct a 'historical Jesus' with his 'messianic consciousness' . . . . That would be merely 'Christ after the flesh', who is no longer".<sup>4</sup>

This point of view is so prevalent, especially in Germany (probably under Bultmann's influence), that nowadays we are familiar with statements like this: "Paul had no interest in the

<sup>1</sup> J. Weiss, *Paul and Jesus* (E.T., London, 1909), pp. 47 f.

<sup>2</sup> That he did so might be regarded as more probable if we accepted W. C. van Unnik's thesis in *Tarsus or Jerusalem?* (E.T., London, 1962) that Jerusalem was the city of Paul's boyhood and upbringing.

<sup>3</sup> R. Bultmann, "Paul", E.T. in *Existence and Faith* (London, 1964), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> R. Bultmann, "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul", E.T. in *Faith and Understanding*, i (London, 1966), 241. Cf. H. J. Schoeps, *Paul* (E.T., London, 1961), pp. 57, 72, 79.

historical Jesus (2 Corinthians v. 16!).” But the point which is thus made by reference to 2 Corinthians v. 16, and reinforced by an exclamation mark, however valid it may be in its own way, is not the point that Paul is making here. Still less is Paul concerned to disparage the knowledge of Jesus enjoyed by the twelve because of their companionship with him during the ministry, in comparison with his own present knowledge of the exalted Lord.<sup>1</sup> Whatever differences there might be between himself and the twelve, they, like him, were now “in Christ”; they, like him, now possessed the Spirit, as he could not but agree. The contrast he is making is that between his former attitude to Christ (and to the world in general) and his present attitude to Christ (and to the world in general), now that he is “in Christ”. The point is brought out excellently in the New English Bible: “With us therefore worldly standards have ceased to count in our estimate of any man; even if once they counted in our understanding of Christ, they do so now no longer.”

But a further question arises. When Paul speaks of his former knowledge of Christ “after the flesh”, does he refer to his former conception of the Messiah, which has been radically changed now that he has come to acknowledge the Messiah in Jesus; or does he refer to his former hostility to Jesus of Nazareth and his followers—a hostility which has now been displaced by love?

More probably, he means that his former conception of the Messiah was “worldly” and wrong. Now that he has learned to identify the Messiah with Jesus, crucified and risen, his understanding of the Messiah has been revolutionized. The conception of the Messiah now takes character from the person of Jesus.

This is exactly opposite to the view of William Wrede, according to whom Paul had an antecedent idea of the Messiah as a “supramundane, divine being” which he retained after his conversion. He had no knowledge of, or interest in, the historical Jesus and his authentic message, but was moved by his Damascus road experience to transfer to the Jesus of his vision all the qualities which hitherto belonged to his ideal

<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester, 1967), p. 183.

Messiah.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, when Paul’s Damascus road experience taught him that Jesus was Lord and Messiah, he thenceforth dismissed from his reckoning the “Christ” whom he had previously known “according to the flesh”. By the same token, of course, his estimate of the historical Jesus was revolutionized, even if this is not what is uppermost in his mind in 2 Corinthians v. 16.

Since his first encounter with Jesus, like his continued experience of him, impressed on him that Jesus was the risen Lord, this aspect remained primary in his consciousness. Yet the risen Lord, with whom he enjoyed immediate acquaintance, was in his mind identical with the historical Jesus, with whom he had not enjoyed such acquaintance. Hence perhaps his characteristic word-order “Christ Jesus”—the enthroned Christ who is at the same time the crucified Jesus.

### III. THE GOSPEL TRADITION

It is Paul’s immediate acquaintance with the risen Lord, from his conversion onward, that forms the basis of his gospel as direct *revelation*, as he expresses it in Galatians i. 12. On the other hand, when he elsewhere speaks of his gospel as *tradition*, “received” by him from those who were “in Christ” before him, he speaks of a message which begins with the historical Jesus. Whatever further dimensions may be recognized in the preaching of Christ crucified, which stands in the forefront of the “tradition”, his crucifixion roots him firmly in history.

One sample of this “tradition” is the narrative in 1 Corinthians xi. 23-25 of Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist “on the night when he was betrayed”. Paul here reminds the Corinthian Christians of something which he “delivered” to them when he planted their church five years previously. His narrative goes back ultimately to the same source as the institution narrative of Mark xiv. 22-24, although it has come down along a separate line of transmission. Paul’s narrative, even in its written form,

<sup>1</sup> W. Wrede, *Paul* (E.T., London, 1907), pp. 147 ff. Wrede here takes sharp issue with J. Wellhausen, A. Harnack and other contemporaries of his who maintained that Paul was the man who understood most truly the essence of Jesus’ message.

is about ten years earlier than Mark's; even so, Mark's may preserve some more archaic features. Thus, Jesus' words in Mark xiv. 25, "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God", may be paraphrased or summarized in Paul's own words "until he comes" in 1 Corinthians xi. 26. Again, some features of Paul's narrative, such as the injunction "do this in remembrance of me", are akin to the longer reading of Luke xxii. 17-20—an interesting textual problem with a bearing on eucharistic origins, but hardly essential to our present concern.<sup>1</sup> Paul's version was probably that which was current in the communities where he first enjoyed Christian fellowship. Since it related what "the Lord Jesus" did and said, it was a tradition ultimately "received from the Lord" and accordingly delivered by Paul to his converts. The core of the narrative would have been preserved with but little change because it was constantly repeated in church meetings as often as Christians "ate this bread and drank the cup", together with the passion story as a whole: "you proclaim the Lord's death", says Paul (verse 26).

Not only from its repetition at celebrations of the Lord's Supper did the passion story early acquire firm outlines, but also from its repetition in the proclamation of the gospel. According to Paul, "Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified" (Galatians iii. 1) when the gospel was preached, and equally on every such occasion Christ was "preached as raised from the dead" (1 Corinthians xv. 12).

That this preaching of Christ crucified and risen belonged to the tradition shared by Paul with the earlier apostles is evident from 1 Corinthians xv. 3-11, where he reminds his Corinthian converts of the gospel which brought them salvation when first he visited their city. "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received", he writes, "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then... he appeared to James...". In an earlier lecture here I pointed out the

<sup>1</sup> On the textual question see B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York, 1971), pp. 173 ff.

coincidence involved in the fact that the two men named here as having received individual interviews with the risen Christ are the two men whom Paul says he met on the first occasion after his conversion when he had contact with the Jerusalem disciples (Galatians i. 18 f.); this indicates the third year after his conversion as the date of his "receiving" the tradition here "delivered".<sup>1</sup>

Apart from that, the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances mark the transition from the historical Jesus to the exalted Christ. Paul's gospel as tradition bridges whatever gulf may be felt to separate the one from the other, for it includes both within its scope, and affirms their continuity and identity.

#### IV. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

One aspect of Paul's dependence on the teaching of Jesus was considered in last year's lecture when I dealt with the relation between the message of Jesus' parables and Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. Paul's appreciation of Jesus as "the end (*τέλος*) of the law" (Romans x. 4), as we saw, arises out of his exceptional insight into the significance of Jesus' ministry and its place in the history of salvation.<sup>2</sup> But there are more incidental passages in Paul's letters which link up with sayings of Jesus recorded here and there in the Gospels.

In 1904 Arnold Resch thought he could detect allusions to 925 such sayings in nine of the Pauline letters along with 133 in Ephesians and 100 in the Pastorals.<sup>3</sup> At the other extreme we have Rudolf Bultmann maintaining that "the teaching of the historical Jesus plays no role, or practically none, in Paul" ("and", he adds, "John").<sup>4</sup> A few dominical utterances, he concedes, may be echoed in Paul's hortatory sections,<sup>5</sup> and he

<sup>1</sup> BULLETIN, xlv (1962-3), 329 f.; the two men are Cephas (Peter) and James (Gal. i. 18 f.).

<sup>2</sup> BULLETIN, lv (1972-3), 274 ff.

<sup>3</sup> A. Resch, "Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu", *Texte und Untersuchungen*, neue Folge xii (1904). He also identified sixty-four sayings of Jesus in the Pauline speeches in Acts, but credibility is strained to the limit by his claim to find allusions in the letters of Paul to dozens of otherwise unrecorded sayings of Jesus. We can all relate the "faith that removes mountains" in 1 Cor. xiii. 2 to Mark xi. 23 or Matt. xvii. 20, but incidental expressions so unambiguously dominical are rare.

<sup>4</sup> R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, i (E.T., London, 1952), 35.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Rom. xii. 14 (Matt. v. 44); xiii. 9 f. (Mark xii. 31); xvi. 19 (Matt. x. 16); 1 Cor. xiii. 2 (Mark xi. 23) (*Theology of the New Testament*, i. 188).

recognizes two such utterances in regulations for church life (1 Corinthians vii. 10 f. ; ix. 14). Moreover :

The tradition of the Jerusalem Church is at least in substance behind the "word of the Lord" on the parousia and resurrection in 1 Thess. iv. 15-17, though it is not certain whether Paul is here quoting a traditionally transmitted saying or whether he is appealing to a revelation accorded to him by the exalted Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Here we must share Professor Bultmann's hesitation. But the two citations of Jesus' teaching in Pauline regulations for church life will repay further attention.

(a) *Divorce and remarriage*

In answering the Corinthians' questions about marriage, Paul cites Jesus' ruling on divorce as binding on his followers. "To the married I say, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate (*χωρισθῆναι*) from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband)—and that the husband should not divorce his wife" (1 Corinthians vii. 10 f.).

While this is not a verbatim quotation, its relation to Mark x. 2 ff. is fairly plain. When Jesus was asked if it was permissible for a man to divorce his wife for any cause, he appealed back from the implied permission of Deuteronomy xxiv. 1-4 to the Genesis record of the creation of man and the institution of marriage (Genesis i. 27 ; ii. 24) and concluded: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder (*χωρῖζειν*)."

But what Paul echoes is the more explicit reply given later by Jesus when the disciples asked him for a fuller explanation: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her ; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, *she* commits adultery" (Mark x. 11 f.).

I do not stay to consider whether the words about the wife's initiating divorce proceedings are a later addition made in the light of the circumstances of the Gentile mission or refer (as I suspect) to the case of Herodias, so topical a scandal at the time of Jesus' Galilean ministry.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that Paul (in the Lord's name) forbids the wife to separate from her husband before he forbids the husband to divorce his wife. Perhaps this

<sup>1</sup> *Theology of the New Testament*, i. 188 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (London, 1971), pp. 26 f.

sequence was dictated by the way in which the Corinthians framed their question at this point. "Should a Christian wife separate from her husband?" No, she should not ; she should continue to live with him as his wife. "But what if she has already separated from him?" Then let her remain celibate (*ἄγαμος*) or else be reconciled to her husband. Perhaps she separated from her husband because she acquired a distaste for married life—or at least for married life with him. But if she finds the consequent abstention irksome, it is out of the question for her to marry someone else ; let her go back to her husband. Having dealt with that aspect of the question which may have been uppermost in the minds of his correspondents, Paul repeats the substantive clause in Jesus' ruling: the husband must not divorce his wife.

While Paul makes no reference to the Matthaean exceptive clause "except for fornication" (Matthew v. 32 ; xix. 9), he introduces an exceptive case of his own: "I say, not the Lord", that if an unbelieving marriage partner is prepared to go on living with a husband or wife who has been converted to Christianity, good and well, but the unbeliever who insists on terminating the relationship must be allowed to go. Some Corinthian Christians may have felt that the Christian partner would be contaminated by continued cohabitation with the non-Christian. On the contrary, says Paul ; the unbeliever is "sanctified" by association with the believer, and their children are therefore "holy". Moreover, where the two go on happily in married life, the believer may well be the salvation of the other. But where the unbelieving partner walks out, the marriage bond is no longer binding (1 Corinthians vii. 12-16).

Although no dominical precedent is invoked for this "Pauline privilege", Paul plainly does not consider that it conflicts with Jesus' ruling. The Gentile mission raised practical issues foreign to the Palestinian situation with which Jesus dealt. Paul deals with these issues as a wise pastor, having regard to the interests of the people concerned and remaining faithful to the spirit and principles of Jesus' answer. The institution of marriage, like the sabbath, was made for human beings, and not *vice versa* (cf. Mark ii. 27).

*(b) The labourer deserves his wages*

The Corinthian Christians could not understand why Paul refused to accept financial support from them when, as they knew, he accepted it from other churches. One reason for his policy was that he suspected that, if he accepted money from the church in Corinth, his opponents there would seize the opportunity to accuse him of mercenary motives. But he could not win: since he determined to give them no such opportunity, they argued that his unwillingness to accept money proved that he was none too confident of his apostolic status, and did not feel himself entitled to the privilege which Peter and his colleagues, together with the brothers of Jesus, enjoyed, of living at the expense of those for whose spiritual well-being they cared. He replies that he is indeed an apostle in the fullest sense—the existence of the Corinthian church is proof enough of that—and that he certainly has the right of living at his converts' expense, but chooses to exercise his liberty by not availing himself of that right. That it is indeed a right he argues on the basis of natural and divine law, but pre-eminently on the ground that none less than "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Corinthians ix. 14). This "command" appears in our gospel tradition in the Matthaean commission to the twelve (Matthew x. 10), "the labourer deserves his food (*τροφή*)", and in the Lukan commission to the seventy (Luke x. 7), "the labourer deserves his wages (*μισθός*)."<sup>1</sup> Of these two forms, it is the latter that comes closer in sense to the "command" that Paul mentions. It is nowhere suggested that he would refuse to eat *food* in the home of one of his Corinthian friends. It was not food but *wages*, monetary payment, that he declined.

In a recent and valuable study, Dr. David Dungan discusses at some length why Paul, in quoting this "command" of the Lord, nevertheless deliberately disobeys it. He concludes that Paul either "initially turned this regulation into a permission" of which he was free to avail himself or not, or else "simply

<sup>1</sup> The wording of Luke x. 7 is explicitly quoted in a similar context in 1 Tim. v. 18.

inherited this alteration ready-made". Either way, "this alteration is based on the realization that this regulation was no longer appropriate in every case".<sup>1</sup> It should rather be said that the "regulation" from the outset had the nature of a "permission". Paul had been brought up to believe that the teaching of the Torah should not be made a means of livelihood or personal aggrandisement. "He who makes a worldly use of the crown of the Torah will waste away", said Hillel;<sup>2</sup> and so Paul, a pupil of Hillel's distinguished successor, was by manual occupation a tent-maker. But he claimed for others the right which he chose to forgo for himself: "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians vi. 6).

It should further be noted that Hillel's dictum comes quite close to an injunction of Jesus included in his commission to the twelve, according to the Matthaean account: "You received without pay; give without pay" (Matthew x. 8).<sup>3</sup> If Paul had known this injunction, he might have quoted it to justify his personal policy. Even in his dealings with other churches, he found it embarrassing to accept and acknowledge personal gifts of money.

*(c) Eat what is set before you*

One of the questions raised in the Corinthians' letter to Paul concerned the eating of the flesh of animals which had been consecrated to pagan divinities. A Christian with conscientious scruples about such food could bar it from his own house, but what was he to do when he was eating out? Naturally, no direct answer to this question would be expected in the teaching of Jesus; it was one which could arise only in a Gentile environment. Paul's answer is: "If one of the unbelievers invites

<sup>1</sup> D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Oxford, 1971), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Pirqa Aboth* i. 13; iv. 7. (The latter passage quotes also the similar dictum of R. Sadoq: "make not of the Torah a crown wherewith to magnify thyself or a spade wherewith to dig". From the two sayings the inference is drawn: "whosoever derives a profit for himself from the words of the Torah is helping on his own destruction".)

<sup>3</sup> This makes it quite clear that *τροφή* in Matt. x. 10 means "food" and excludes money.

you to a dinner and you are disposed to go, *eat whatever is set before you* (πᾶν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν ἐσθίετε) without raising any question on the ground of conscience" (1 Corinthians x. 27).

But even here we have an echo of words of Jesus. In his instructions to the seventy disciples in Luke x. 8, Jesus says: "Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, *eat what is set before you* (ἐσθίετε τὰ παρατιθέμενα ὑμῖν)." No such injunction appears in Jesus' commission to the twelve, in any of the three accounts of it, whereas in the commission to the seventy the injunction appears twice, albeit in different terms (cf. Luke x. 7: "remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide"). The mission to the twelve was restricted to Israel, explicitly so in Matthew x. 5 f. and by implication in Mark vi. 7-11 and Luke ix. 1-5. But the mission of the seventy, which is peculiar to Luke, has often been thought to adumbrate the wider Gentile mission which he records in his second volume. Whereas twelve was the number of the tribes of Israel, seventy was in Jewish tradition the number of the nations of the world.<sup>1</sup>

If Paul here is quoting from Jesus' instructions to the seventy, he is generalizing from a particular occasion to a recurring situation. And that he is indeed quoting from those instructions—or at least from the tradition of Jesus' commissions to his disciples—is rendered the more probable by his appeal, which we have already considered, to that same tradition in defence of the principle that the preacher of the gospel is entitled to get his living by the gospel.

(d) *Tribute to whom tribute is due*

Jesus' ruling on the subject of divorce, at which we have already looked, was given as an answer to a question which (according to Mark x. 2) was put to him "in order to test him". The same evangelist records another question which was later put to him with a similar motive: "they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to entrap him in his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. R. C. Leaney, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke* (London, 1958), p. 176. Of course, if we adopt the variant reading "seventy-two", a different symbolism is indicated. Cf. B. M. Metzger, "Seventy or Seventy-two Disciples?" in *Historical and Literary Studies, Pagan, Jewish and Christian* (Leiden and Grand Rapids, 1968), pp. 67 ff.

talk; and they came and said to him, 'Teacher, . . . is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not?' " (Mark xii. 13 f.).

Paul deals with the payment of tribute in the debatable paragraph Romans xiii. 1-7, but here he does not invoke the Lord's authority as he does with regard to divorce, or support for missionaries. Besides, whereas Jesus' answer to the question about the tribute money draws a distinction between rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and rendering to God what is God's, Paul sees in the rendering of Caesar's dues to Caesar one form of rendering to God what is due to God, for the secular authorities are God's servants, and resistance to them involves resistance to God. Therefore, he says, "render to all of them their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due . . ." (Romans xiii. 7).

Even if Paul makes no reference to Jesus' words here, may he have had them at the back of his mind? It is possible to understand his "render (ἀπόδοτε) to all of them their dues" as a generalization of Jesus' answer in Mark xii. 17: "Render (ἀπόδοτε) to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's". But if Paul's words are a generalization of Jesus' answer, the generalization goes much farther here than with regard to other words of Jesus to which attention has been paid in this paper. It was one thing to answer the question implied behind Romans xiii. 1-7: "Should Christians in Rome and the Empire generally, subjects of Caesar, render obedience and tribute to him and to his subordinate officials?" Paul's answer is "Yes, because Caesar and his subordinates exercise authority by divine appointment, and they perform God's service when they maintain law and order, protecting the law-abiding and executing judgment against criminals." It was quite another thing to answer the implications of the question put to Jesus in Jerusalem, against the background of the rising of Judas the Galilaean in A.D. 6 and the insurgent movement which perpetuated his ideals. Judas and his followers maintained that it was high treason against the God of Israel for his people in his land to acknowledge the sovereignty of a pagan ruler by paying him tribute. Jesus' questioners hoped to impale him on the horns of a dilemma; no such dilemma confronted Paul. To Paul the issue was clear,

and his apostolic experience had given him repeated opportunities of appreciating the benefits of Roman rule. He was not so simple-minded as to imagine that the imperial authorities could never contravene the ordinance of God and issue decrees to which Christians would be bound to refuse compliance, although he does not raise that issue here. But even here he makes it plain that the duty of obedience to the secular powers is a temporary one, lasting only to the end of the present "night"; in the "day" which is "at hand" a new order will be introduced in which "the saints will judge the world" (Romans xiii. 12; 1 Corinthians vi. 2).

#### V. THE LAW OF CHRIST

Paul could have been taught in the school of Gamaliel that the whole law was comprehended in the law of love to one's neighbour; we recall how Gamaliel's predecessor Hillel summarized the whole law in the injunction: "Do not to another what is hateful to yourself."<sup>1</sup> But when Paul speaks of the bearing of one another's burdens as the fulfilment of "the law of Christ" (Galatians vi. 2), we may reasonably infer that he knew how Christ had applied the commandment of Leviticus xix. 18: "you shall love your neighbour as yourself". Moreover, the injunction "bear one another's burdens" seems to be a generalizing expansion of the words immediately preceding it: "If a man is overtaken in a trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians vi. 1). This is remarkably reminiscent of words of Jesus occurring in a series of community rules preserved by the First Evangelist only: "If your brother sins,<sup>2</sup> go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone; if he listens to you, you have gained your brother" (Matthew xviii. 15).

Further features of "the law of Christ" may be discerned in Romans xii. 9-21, with its injunctions to sincere and practical love, so close in spirit (as has been said already) to the Sermon on the Mount. Mutual love, sympathy and esteem within the

<sup>1</sup> TB *Shabbath* 31a.

<sup>2</sup> The words "against you" (*εἰς σέ*) should probably be omitted after "sins" (*ἀμαρτήσῃ*), as in N.E.B.

believing brotherhood are to be expected, but this section enjoins love and forgiveness towards those outside the brotherhood, not least towards its enemies and persecutors. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" (Romans xii. 14) echoes Luke vi. 28: "bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you". So Paul, speaking elsewhere of his own practice, can say: "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate" (1 Corinthians iv. 12 f.).

"Repay no one evil for evil" (Romans xii. 17) breathes the same spirit as Matthew v. 44 and Luke vi. 27: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." So does the quotation from Proverbs xxv. 21 f. in Romans xii. 20, where it is probably significant that Paul leaves out the last clause of the original. "If your enemy is hungry", he says, "feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head"—but he does not add "and the Lord will reward you". Perhaps the figure of the "burning coals" originally suggested intensified retribution, but in this new context it receives a nobler significance: Treat your enemy kindly, for this may make him ashamed of his hostile conduct and lead to his repentance. In other words, the best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn him into a friend and so "overcome evil with good" (Romans xii. 21).

The theme is resumed in Romans xiii. 8-10, after Paul's words about the duty of Christians to the civil authorities. After saying, with reference to the authorities, "Render to all of them their dues, . . . honour to whom honour is due" (Romans xiii. 7), he goes on, more generally: "Let the only debt you owe anyone be the debt of neighbourly love; the man who has discharged this debt has fulfilled the law" (Romans xiii. 8). This is supported by the quotation of Leviticus xix. 18 ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself") as the sum of all the commandments—and this places Paul squarely within the tradition of Jesus. For Jesus set this commandment next to that of Deuteronomy vi. 5 ("You shall love the LORD your God . . .") and said: "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Matthew xxii. 37-40; cf. Mark

xii. 28-34). Paul quotes the second great commandment here and not the first because the immediate question concerns a Christian's duty to his neighbour. The commandments in the second table of the decalogue, most of which are quoted in Romans xiii. 9, forbid the harming of one's neighbour in any way; since love never harms another, "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans xiii. 10).

When in the next paragraph (Romans xiii. 11-14) Paul speaks of Christian life in days of crisis, he once more echoes the teaching of Jesus. When Jesus told his disciples of the critical events preceding the coming of the Son of Man, he said: "when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke xxi. 28). Those who hoped "to stand before the Son of Man" must therefore be vigilant (Luke xxi. 36). "It is high time now", says Paul, "for you to wake from sleep; for salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" (Romans xiii. 11). To Paul, at the beginning of A.D. 57, it was plain how the crucial events of the next decade or so were casting their shadow before. Their course and outcome could not be foreseen in detail, but Jesus' words, "he who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark xiii. 13), were to verify themselves in the experience of his people who passed through these crises. With the trial comes the way of deliverance (1 Corinthians x. 13). Meanwhile the sons of light must live in readiness for the coming day, renouncing all the "works of darkness" (Romans xiii. 12).

In another place where Paul deals with the same subject, he tells his readers that, since they are sons of light, the day of the Lord, which comes "like a thief in the night", will not take them by surprise (1 Thessalonians v. 2-5). This too takes up a note of Jesus' teaching: "if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would have been awake and would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke xii. 39 f.).<sup>1</sup>

Paul's exhortation in Romans xiii concludes with the command in verse 14 to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ". This expresses

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Matt. xxiv. 43 f.; Rev. xvi. 15.

more directly what he speaks of elsewhere as putting on "the new man" (Colossians iii. 10; Ephesians iv. 24).<sup>1</sup> The Christian graces—making up the "armour of light" which he tells his friends to wear instead of gratifying unregenerate desires (Romans xiii. 12)—are the graces which he knew to have been displayed in harmonious perfection in Jesus. While Paul did not know the written Gospels as we have them, his tradition ascribed the same ethical qualities to Jesus as are portrayed in the Gospels,<sup>2</sup> and he commends those qualities, one by one or comprehensively, as an example for his converts and others to follow.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Put on" may be one of several captions under which the sections of a primitive baptismal catechesis were summed up; cf. Gal. iii. 27 ("as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"); also Col. iii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> According to R. Bultmann (*Theology of the New Testament*, i. 188), "when he refers to Christ as an example, he is thinking not of the historical but of the pre-existent Jesus". This is true of two of the Pauline texts he quotes in support, where Christ's self-denial in becoming man is the subject (Phil. ii. 5 ff.; 2 Cor. viii. 9), but not of the third (Rom. xv. 3), where his enduring of reproach for God's sake during his life on earth is in view, nor yet of those others mentioned above, where many of the virtues recommended to Christians would not have been relevant to the pre-existent Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Another approach to the Jesus-Paul debate has been opened up by Morton Smith in his *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Harvard University Press, 1973). He argues that the libertine tradition against which Paul polemicizes is so pervasive in early Christianity that it must be derived from Jesus himself, more particularly from his "baptismal practice" (op. cit., p. 262). As the legalists in the primitive church "appealed to the tradition of Jesus' exoteric teaching", so the libertine interpretation "preserved elements of his esoteric teaching" (op. cit., p. 263). In the conflict between the two, "Paul represents the safe and sane and socially acceptable compromise" (ibid.). Professor Smith's arguments must be assessed both in the light of our evaluation of the "secret Gospel of Mark" referred to and partly quoted in a recently discovered document which may be from a letter of Clement of Alexandria (cf. my Ethel M. Wood lecture, *The Secret Gospel of Mark*, London, 1974), and in the light of our continuing study of the New Testament and early Christian documents in general. The ambiguity (arising from our ignorance) of some of the basic material contained in these sources is illustrated by the differing interpretations of the "Christ party" of 1 Cor. i. 12, identified with the Judaizing group by F. C. Baur ("Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde", *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie*, v (1831), 61 ff.) and with the libertine group by T. W. Manson (*Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (Manchester, 1962), p. 207).