

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. JESUS was distinctive and unique, but without prejudice to his distinctive and unique character we may say that Jesus belonged to a general class. Of this class a few dim records have survived. He was an itinerant preacher, and indeed one of a class typical of Galilee. Persons of this type must have been familiar. Even the rabbis speak of the '‘ober gelila'ah' (Galilean itinerant).

A wandering Galilean Rab and preacher was a common sight and specially known by the title of "Galilean itinerant." . . . Like every other Rab or preacher he had a following of regular and casual disciples. — J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, London, 1929, pp. 253 ff.

In particular he was an itinerant preacher of eschatology; indeed, this was, perhaps, the more usual case. If we may trust the testimony of Celsus (in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, vii. 9), preachers of this sort were to be found in Syria, and we must remember that Syria was adjacent to Palestine, and surrounded it. The frontiers were open, and, geographically, one country passed into the other. Celsus speaks of prophets who appeared with the message:

I am God, or the servant of God, or a divine spirit.
But I am coming, for the world is already in the throes
of destruction. And you will soon see me coming with
the power of heaven (= God?).

Even if the terminology of these prophets has possibly been adapted by Celsus to Christian terminology for polemical reasons, yet, unless his assertions are sheer inventions for controversial purposes, his words would

prove that the class of eschatological itinerant preacher still existed in his time in the region near Galilee.

Jesus' message of the kingdom did not fall from the skies as a complete novelty, but had long been prepared for. In particular, Jesus' preaching of the kingdom is manifestly connected with (and yet, as we shall see, in definite contrast to) an earlier historical phenomenon, i.e. the later Jewish eschatology and apocalyptic. These constitute an extraordinary feature in the history of religion, and Jesus' preaching both reflects and transforms them. From the standpoint of the historical criticism of religion, his message must be described as one of their important forms.

2. But just for this reason, Jesus' message was not purely Jewish. Jesus was a Jew and was descended from Jews. But the late Jewish apocalyptic was not purely Jewish, if one understands by that term something which derived and developed from purely Israelite traditions. Rather, being a late Jewish form, it was inherited from ancient Judaism, but with an intrusive element which came not from that source but from the Chaldean and Iranian east. Indeed, at first, it had a remoter origin, viz. in ancient Aryan sources, and these arose prior to the separation of Aryans into Iranians and Indians. The intrusive element was the great Aryan eschatology of Iran, vitalized by Chaldean features, in particular, as manifested in the doctrinal term, 'the kingdom.' Before 'the kingdom' was a definite technical term in Israel, it was used in this sense among Aryan priests and theologians.

As far as Israel was concerned, there is no doubt that the occasion when eastern influences of this sort made themselves felt was the captivity in Babylonia (and Media) a region where Persian and Chaldean ideas mingled. In detail, the eschatological systems such as were put together in the apocalyptic book of Enoch, and on which the eschatology of Jesus and his circle was largely dependent and modelled, 'point to North Palestine' (C. Beer) as

INTRODUCTION

their place of origin. Galilee was a land through which pilgrims journeyed on their way from the eastern Jewish diaspora in Babylonia. At the same time, Galilee was closely connected with Syria by highways and foreign residents, and by a Jewish diaspora which had spread out from Galilee as far as Tyre, Sidon, Damascus, and through Syria generally. Now if Celsus is to be trusted, even Syria had been stirred by eschatological preaching (and this, again, can scarcely be explained otherwise than by eastern influences). But in that case we must suppose not only that eastern eschatology penetrated into Galilee, through its contact with eastern Judaism, but that Jewish eschatology and apocalyptic perhaps formed part of a movement which in a more general way had stirred the Aramaic and Syrian world.

In any case, late Jewish eschatology was not purely Jewish. Likewise the strict differentiation usually made between Palestinian, Oriental, and Hellenistic is open to question. Even Jesus' eschatology of the kingdom of God was not purely Palestinian. The apocalyptic teaching which has come to us from him had long contained elements which did not originate in Palestine. And to make 'Palestinian' a test of whether a certain word was or was not actually spoken by Jesus is a mistake from the start, because 'Palestinian' is itself an uncertain norm. Not even 'Gnostic' is a reliable canon of spuriousness. For as Gressmann correctly says (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1922, p. 179):

Gnosis is of the very spirit of apocalyptic teaching. And even as early as Enoch's apocalypticism, on which Jesus was dependent, we find definite gnostic traits and terms. . . . Official Judaism turned away from Hellenistic religion and became a rigid legal religion, which found its final form in the Talmud. Another stream, which one can designate unofficial Judaism, led in a straight line to Jesus.

3. As a Galilean, Jesus belonged to unofficial Judaism, which was certainly not typically Jewish. W. Bauer has

thrown light upon this fact.¹ He shows Jesus in his specifically Galilean character. Of course, after the fall of the Israelite northern kingdom, Galilee was not a land of Gentiles in the sense that it had been emptied of its Israelite population (any more than was Samaria), and it is hardly true that the ancient Yahweh cult had completely vanished here.² Nevertheless, it was not really 'Judaized' until scarcely more than a hundred years before Christ. It had to a great extent the character of the diaspora, and was relatively untouched by the strict doctrinal and scholastic training of Judea and Jerusalem. Presumably for that very reason it was more open to the influence of religious movements such as apocalyptic, which by its nature was out of line with official or typical Judaism.

At any rate, Jesus' preaching of the kingdom contains elements which are certainly not of Palestinian origin, but point definitely to connections with the Aryan and Iranian east, and some of which are stressed by him in a manner not the case even in Enoch's apocalyptic.

4. To this must be added a further observation: The ancient Israelite population was by no means taken into captivity in its entirety. Rather, the majority of the people remained where they were, as was also the case in Samaria. They were the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel.' It is, therefore, arbitrary to assume that at a later date the Church invented the idea that an 'ober galila'ah,' a Galilean itinerant, extended his wanderings into these districts. The gospel records about the matter are on the contrary quite in keeping with the facts. When Jesus turned in this direction, he was not going 'on the highways of the Gentiles' but into the districts of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, districts which had long been penetrated by a veritable Jewish dispersion. Jesus' answer

¹ Cp. his essay, dedicated to Jülicher, *Jesus, der Galiläer*.

² The ancient Israelite northern kingdom extended, as the district of the tribes of Naphtali and Asher, to the Leontes, i.e. northward beyond the district of Tyre and of Caesarea Philippi.

INTRODUCTION

to the Canaanite woman, Mt. xv. 22 ff., fits these circumstances. He was near to Tyre, yet he replied :

I am sent only to the lost sheep of Israel,

whom he was seeking there also. Naturally, his vocation as the 'latent Son of Man' directed him only to Israel. But through the conversion of Israel even the nations were some day to attain salvation. Thus it is intelligible that when Jesus was won over by the specially powerful faith of such non-Israelites as this woman and the centurion of Capernaum, he occasionally exercised his charismatic healing power even on non-Israelites, although he felt it should normally be restricted to the limits of his special mission. In their faith, he glimpsed a higher mandate. And he was helped to this attitude by the fact that he was a *Galilean* itinerant preacher and miraculous healer. W. Bauer has set these relationships once for all in the right light; on p. 27 of his essay he says :

Galileans grew up outside the jurisdiction of scribalism and Pharisaism, in considerable freedom from the Law and without the torturing anxiety that the proximity of the Gentiles would contaminate them. Jesus spent his childhood in Nazareth, scarcely five miles distant from the half-Gentile Sepphoris. One who at that time took up preaching in the open air on the sea of Gennesaret or elsewhere in Galilee was not in a position to exclude Gentile hearers. . . . [P. 29] : The Galilean Jesus represented Judaism in a form inclined to a universal outlook, or, if one prefers, in a form syncretistically weakened. He certainly felt himself to be a son of the theocracy and was conscious of being sent to his fellow-countrymen, but he did this somewhat in the way in which Paul conceived his apostolate to the Gentiles.

And it is for the same reason that Jesus as a Galilean itinerant had, as Lk. ix. 52 reports,¹ no scruples about undertaking a journey through the Samaritan district.

¹ This statement, again, has been regarded as a creation of the later church, on the grounds that the events of vv. 57 ff. could not

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN CHRIST'S PREACHING

That Jesus as a Galilean belonged to a land which was Judaized only at a late period, and which was always open to foreign influences; that in Capernaum and Bethsaida he necessarily preached and worked among a mixed public; that he travelled in regions which were not really Jewish; that he could also have planned to journey through Samaria; that at times he exercised his charismatic healing power on non-Jews; that as he travelled between Samaria and Galilee (in a border district with presumably a mixed population), he used his healing power without asking whether the patients were Jews, and even healed a Samaritan (who, being the only grateful one, was praised); that he could put forward a Samaritan as an example of neighbourly love—these traits combine to form the harmonious picture of a man who was not a Jew in the orthodox and one-sided sense. At the same time they correspond to the fact with which we shall become familiar, that his preaching was dependent upon apoca-

have happened in Samaria, and that Luke assures us in xvii. 11 that Jesus travelled 'through the midst of Samaria.' In reality, Luke reports that Jesus wanted to journey through Samaria, but encountered resistance in a village near the Galilean border. Of necessity he then turned away and took the familiar alternative road to Jerusalem through the wady Galud (the very road that I have travelled in the reverse direction). Thus he journeyed literally 'between Samaria and Galilee,' went past Beth-Shan, crossed the Jordan, and reached Jericho via Perea.

Regarding the phrase *διὰ μέσον* in Lk. xvii. 11 in the sense 'between,' my deceased friend Jakobsohn (all honour to his memory) once wrote me:

The best parallel to Lk. xvii. 11 is Xenophon, Anab. 1.4.4, where the River Carsus flows between two walls, which form the *πύλαι τῆς Κιλικίας καὶ τῆς Συρίας*, the borders between the two lands: *διὰ μέσον δὲ ῥέει τούτων πόταμος Κάρσος*. The phrase *διὰ μέσον* is to be understood in the sense in which, in classical usage, *διὰ* stands with the genitive in place names. The accusative in this connection is found only in Homer and in the poetry which is often dependent on him; but it was preserved in the Ionian dialect and crops up again in Hellenistic prose from the time of the early emperors. Accordingly, it is established that *διὰ μέσον* = 'between' = *μεταξύ*.

INTRODUCTION

lyptic, especially the apocalyptic of the books of Enoch. These, too, are Jewish. They are, however, neither orthodox nor typical Jewish books, but combine ideas from the east with Jewish ideas. Whence they originate and of what sort they are, we shall discuss in the following section.

SAMPLE