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The Mission of Jesus

ACCORDING TO orthodox Christians Jesus Christ is in no way like ordinary men. Basing their portrait of him on a harmony of the four gospels, they stress the completely supernatural character of the Master: he was born of a virgin, could walk on water and still a storm, raise the dead, feed 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes, predict the future, outwit the devil, be resurrected from the grave, and after forty days ascend physically into heaven.

Everything about the ministry of Jesus shines with heavenly light—from the song of the angels at his birth to the earthquake at his death, signifying the cosmic anguish at the crucifixion of God's only-begotten Son. On the basis of such scriptural evidence the church taught the doctrines of Christ's pre-existence, the immaculate conception of Mary, the virgin birth of Jesus, his miracle-filled ministry, physical resurrection, literal ascension and the physical assumption of the virgin Queen of Heaven. To those who questioned such dogmas, Christian apologists pointed out that the scripture was inerrant revelation documented by eyewitnesses and guaranteed by the infallible authority of the church.

One by one these pillars of orthodoxy were shaken. The Protestant Reformation undermined the infallibility of the church. Biblical critics demolished the doctrine of an inerrant Bible. Scriptural scholars showed that the New Testament does not contain eyewitness reports but rather only the developing faith of second and third generations of Christians. Mark, our earliest gospel, was written about 70 A.D., almost forty years after the events it purports to describe, for example.

By the middle of the 19th century, because of the Age of Reason's disbelief in the miraculous and its contempt for popular superstition, Protestant theologians tended to stress the humanity of Jesus, his superior teaching and his moral example. Also, the secular historians devised rules by which literary sources could be dated and evaluated. By examining the New Testament record by the canons of historical criticism it became possible to see how the Jesus of history had been obscured by later legends.

Adolf von Harnack, the Berlin historian of Christian dogma, illustrates the liberal's quest for the historical Jesus. Among many scholarly writings, his *What is Christianity* (1900) is one of the few works of modern theology which created much excitement and stirred up an enormous furor. It is still generally regarded as the one book which most directly represents liberal Protestant theology.

Following David Friedrich Strauss and Julius Wellhausen, for Harnack, Jesus was primarily and essentially a human religious figure, a genius but not a god. He was a Jew who uncovered the hidden treasures in the soil of the Old Testament, reaffirming everything lofty and spiritual in the Psalms and Prophets. His was a plain and simple gospel about God the Father and the brotherhood of man.

While orthodox Christianity focused upon the centrality of Christ, Jesus himself had been primarily concerned about the kingdom of God. In Harnack's opinion, the true Gospel is the good news of the reign of the righteous God to appear in the new day when men realize their citizenship in His Kingdom. Men who respond to Jesus place themselves under a new law: whole-hearted love to God and one's neighbor. By self-denial, humility and

heartfelt trust in God, man achieves perfection. Jesus, the meek and gentle one, shows us how kind the Lord is.

According to Harnack, the Messiahship of Jesus means that he is the supreme teacher of righteousness. Jesus was the Christ because he taught the fatherhood of God, the infinite value of the individual soul, the brotherhood of man and the universal kingdom of love. He leads men to the gracious God and leaves them in His hands. By looking at Jesus and following him, a disciple becomes convinced that God rules heaven and earth as our Father and Redeemer.

Jesus provided the highest example of faith by voluntarily suffering death on the cross. His simple message of love and forgiveness was, however, misunderstood by the disciples who thought of him in an apocalyptic manner and even more distorted by the later church who Hellenized the Hebrew gospel. According to Harnack, the New Testament itself represents the first stage in a mistaken interpretation of the real Jesus who was basically an ethical teacher. Hidden behind the Christ of dogma stands the Jesus of history, the Man of Nazareth.[1]

In 1905 a young Strasbourg theologian named Albert Schweitzer began piling books in his room as preparation for his epoch-making *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. After reading most of the available literature from Reimarus (1694-1768) of Hamburg to William Wrede (1859-1907) of Breslau, Schweitzer concluded:

> Those who are fond of talking about negative theology can find their account here. There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the Life of Jesus.
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> The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by

[1] Sample liberal lives of Jesus were written by M. Goguel, Edgar Goodspeed, Harry Emerson Fosdick and Shirley Jackson Case, besides Harnack's.

> rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.
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> This image has not been destroyed from without, it has fallen to pieces, cleft and disintegrated by the concrete historical problems which came to the surface one after another. . . .[2]

Yet even after Schweitzer, the writing of new books on the life of Jesus has continued unabated. Before we speak of the view of Unification theology, it would be fruitful to summarize briefly some of the representative contemporary views. This will not only convey the atmosphere of present-day thought but will demonstrate how different scholars using the same materials can surface with radically contradictory ideas, and thus provide the reader with an awareness of the questions and problems which lie behind a troubled Christianity.

HIS LIFE: REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS

A. Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer provides a classic form of the argument that Jesus expected the kingdom of God to dawn imminently, as had been written by apocalyptic writers from Daniel to Enoch. His account, which he feels has made sense out of confused Gospel narratives and has depicted Jesus in his overwhelming greatness, can be restated as follows:

Jesus preached a speedy kingdom of God and was certain that the eschatological miracle would soon occur; he even predicted its arrival by the very next harvest. Even though few in Nazareth could expect the kingdom so suddenly, he sent out his disciples to alert the people, confident that while they journeyed throughout Israel, the divine event would take place. Much to the astonishment of Jesus, the glorious reign of God still had not dawned when the twelve returned.

Jesus' prediction of the coming Son of Man and the tribulations, the birth pangs of the messianic age, was not fulfilled. He had

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[2] A. Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus,* Macmillan, N.Y., 1948, p. 396.

chosen the disciples to hurl a firebrand into the world. The feeding of the multitudes immediately upon the return of the disciples became an eschatological sacrament, a foretaste of the messianic feast to come. Soon after, in a moment of ecstatic vision at the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James and John discovered the messianic secret: Jesus himself was the long-awaited Son of Man. Naturally, Peter spread the good news to the rest of the disciples.

Before the missionary tour of the twelve to all the cities of Israel, Jesus assumed that he and they together would undergo suffering in the great affliction to take place immediately prior to the glory of the messianic age. When they returned and no kingdom had dawned, he realized that the predicted affliction would be focused upon him alone. Meditating upon the fate of John the Baptist and inspired by the 'Suffering Servant' poetry in Deutero-Isaiah, Jesus decided that he must pass through pain and humiliation to permit the divine consummation of human history; the general affliction of the last times was transformed into the personal secret of the Passion.

Thus, the journey to Jerusalem was a funeral march to victory; Jesus was surrounded by people who continued to welcome him as the forerunner of the Messiah. Even if only the inner circle knew his true role as the Coming One, for him death was the necessary prelude to the kingdom. At the triumphal entry into Jerusalem the crowds hailed him as the herald of the imminent rule of God. In the Holy City, Jesus announced the coming day of the Lord.

Judas provided the Sanhedrin with the single bit of information they needed to convict Jesus of the capital crime of blasphemy. He divulged the messianic secret: the Nazarene prophet thought of himself as the long-awaited Son of Man. When he was arrested and interrogated by the High Priest, Jesus confessed his true identity (Luke 22:66-71). Hence without delay, the Jewish religious authorities handed him over to the Roman procurator for crucifixion.[3]

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[3] A. Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God,* Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1950.

In what ways do Schweitzer's conclusions differ from popular lay conceptions? Clearly, though he views Jesus as a heroic figure, the genuine promised One, he brings in a realistic dimension to the awesome responsibility of Jesus; that is, Jesus as a man was in a sense learning his mission as the course of events bore down upon him, and reacting as he saw God's will revealed.

The dichotomy between the apocalyptic vision and reality of the path Jesus trod is also an element in the theology of Professor Wilhelm Bousset.

B. Wilhelm Bousset

Though Bousset's praise and reverence for Jesus is no less than Schweitzer's, he attempts to shear the legendary and the mythical from the historical Jesus by an explanation of the motivation of the original writers of the New Testament. At the same time, however, he maintains that fortunately enough, their motives have indirectly kept for us a clear picture of Jesus, notwithstanding the nimbus of the miraculous that surrounds the Biblical narratives. They interpreted him as the apocalyptic Son of Man to come rather than the later idea of Hellenistic Christianity that he was a lord of some mystery cult.

Kyrios Christos, Bousset's work of 1913, represents one of the landmarks in German New Testament criticism; his pioneering viewpoint that there is a distinction between the original Palestinian community and the later Hellenistic church has ever since been a presupposition for the historical study of early Christianity. In it he gives many illustrations to substantiate his claims.

In the Gospel of Mark, it is maintained that the trained reader can verify the manner in which the messianic thrust of the evangelical Palestinian community redirected history. For example, a popular disturbance which accidentally broke out when Jesus arrived at Jerusalem is reshaped into a pre-ordained messianic proclamation; an extremely powerful gift for healing was embellished and translated into the miraculous. Further, Bousset claims that fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning his passion and resurrection was superimposed upon the image of Jesus.

The following quotation best encapsulates Bousset's thinking:

> Thus did the community embellish and decorate the life portrait of its master. But by doing so it accomplished more than that: it preserved a good bit of the authentic and original life. It preserved for us the beauty and wisdom of his parables in their crystalline form—a Greek community would no longer have been able to do this. It bowed down before the stark heroism of his ethical demands which were rooted in an equally daring faith in God, and it took practically nothing away from them; it faithfully preserved the picture of the great battler for truth, simplicity, and plainness in religion against all false virtuousness; it dared to repeat without weakening it his devastating judgment on the piety of the dominant and leading circles; it basked in the luster of his trust in God, and of his regally free, careless way with respect to the things and the course of this world; it steeled itself to his hard and heroic demand that they fear God and not man; with trembling and quaking soul it repeated his preaching of the eternal responsibility of the human soul and of God's judgment; with jubilant rejoicing it proclaimed his glad message of the kingdom of God and the duty of fellowship in righteousness and love and mercy and reconciliation.[4]

In Bousset's Christology we see the same consciousness of the humanness of Jesus, the exaggerated expectations of the people and the need for clarity in visualizing his true situation that Schweitzer stressed. However, though Schweitzer and Bousset deny the 'mythology', they do not deny the authenticity of Jesus

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[4] Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1970, pp. 116-117. Bousset's study of Christology goes up to the work of Irenaeus. In somewhat the same critical spirit, Alfred Loisy of the College of France wrote his *Birth of the Christian Religion*.

and his mission. Joseph Klausner, a professor at Hebrew University, would go a step further.

C. Joseph Klausner

From the noted Zionist Joseph Klausner has come one of the classic Jewish studies on the life and times of Jesus. An authority on Jewish Messianism and well-read in the field of New Testament scholarship, he is considered by some singularly talented for the difficult task of being fair to the founder of Christianity and at the same time pointing out that Judaism has grounds to reject him.

For this Jewish professor, Jesus was born at Nazareth, a peaceful Galilean town cut off from the rest of the world. There, Jesus could not help being a dreamer, a visionary whose thoughts were far from his people's future or the heavy Roman yoke but turned on the sorrows of the individual soul and the value of inner reformation. As a spiritual redeemer of Israel, he believed he could automatically effect a social redemption without revolt against Roman power.

For Klausner, Jesus' father was Joseph and his mother Mary. Joseph was a carpenter who passed on that skill to his eldest son, and since Joseph died while Jesus was still young, as the eldest son he was compelled to support his widowed mother and orphaned brothers and sisters.

When John the Baptist attracted crowds to the Jordan River, Jesus came with the multitude to be baptized. The Baptist did not recognize him or pay any regard to his presence. For the Nazarene, however, this was the most decisive event in his life. Gifted with a strong imagination and dazzled by the blinding light of the Judean sun, Jesus thought he saw the heavens open. Suddenly there flashed through his mind the idea that he was the hoped-for Messiah.

Obsessed with this idea, Jesus withdrew into the desert to meditate on his future. He there rejected the thought of rebellion against Rome because "his dreamy spiritual nature" was not fitted for Zealot methods. Dismissing also the temptations to prove his Messiahship by becoming a great teacher in the Torah, or by

bestowing material blessings upon his people, he found no way open to him but to conceal his claim until after John the Baptist was arrested.

As a wandering Galilean preacher, the former carpenter preached the near approach of the kingdom; he did not say who the Messiah was or where he might be. By calling himself the "Son of Man", he hinted 1) that he was only a simple, ordinary human being, 2) that he was a prophet like Ezekiel, 3) that he might be the apocalyptic Messiah of Daniel and the Book of Enoch.

In Palestine it was a common sight to see rabbis attracting disciples in large numbers. Although Jesus did not altogether follow the beaten track, he seemed like a Pharisee differing from others only in certain details. Klausner says, "Throughout the Gospels there is not one item of ethical teaching which cannot be paralleled either in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature of the period near to the time of Jesus."[5] In the Capernaum synagogue, Jesus read from the Prophets and expounded like a scribe or Pharisee and was regarded as such. This enabled him to attract disciples and saved him from persecution almost to the last.

As a typical holy man, the Galilean itinerant was expected to perform miracles. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus who lived in Jesus' day both were credited with such wonders. Neurasthenics and especially hysterical women were numerous in Palestine because of the wars, tumults and protracted oppressive rule of the Herodian dynasty and Romans. According to Klausner, Jesus obviously had the unusual power of "hypnotic suggestion" enabling him to cure various nervous disorders.

Four other types of miracles credited to Jesus are for Klausner far less believable. Some are due to the early New Testament writers' wish to fulfill statements in the Old Testament: if Elijah and Elisha raised children from the dead, Christians had to circulate stories about the daughter of Jairus or the young man of Nain. Certain poetical descriptions, the parable of the barren fig tree, for

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[5] Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1943, p. 384.

instance, were transformed into miracles in the minds of the disciples. Some miracles, like Jesus walking on the water, were hallucinations of simple village folk. Finally, acts occurred which were only apparently miraculous: the stilling of the storm, for example. As for the miracles of healing, they were plausible enough; but Jesus discouraged relying solely on them possibly because he was not always successful in effecting cures and was therefore afraid to attempt them too often.

Because of his carelessness in regard to the cultic laws of Judaism, Jesus encountered direct opposition from the Pharisees, and because of his popularity with the crowds he aroused the suspicion of the Galilean ruler Herod Antipas. His own village of Nazareth rejected him and his own family said he was "beside himself" or mentally unbalanced. Frustrated and disheartened, Jesus fled from his enemies to Gentile territory. He was indignant against the places which rejected him and bitter about his worsening situation.

Later, a homeless wayfarer in a foreign land, Jesus at Caesarea Philippi was deeply touched by Peter's confession of his messianic status. He warned the disciples that when he proceeded to Jerusalem he would suffer greatly but in the end emerge victorious. The Passover crowds would hail him as the long-awaited Messiah. Peter protested that if they were not safe in Galilee, they courted far graver danger in the center of civil and religious authority. To stir their ardor, Jesus promised the disciples that they would not taste death until they saw the kingdom of God come with power. On the mount of his transfiguration, the three closest disciples therefore envisioned their leader as the triumphant Messiah.

At Bethphage on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Jesus planned to make a royal entry into the Holy City. As King-Messiah but also a simple Galilean, he rode not a war horse but a donkey. Before crowds of people at the city gates, Jesus publicly revealed himself as the Messiah.

To bring men to repentance and to draw all eyes to the Messiah, Jesus had to achieve some great public deed, performed

with the utmost display, to gain the utmost renown. He therefore resolved to purify the temple now crammed with Jews from all over the world. What Jesus did was by sheer force. In contradiction to his own law, he resisted evil in an active and violent fashion. Yet the brief incident won him the applause of many pilgrims resentful of the temple aristocracy.

Further, in Klausner's theory, Judas, the only Judean member of the Twelve, became gradually convinced Jesus was a pseudo-Messiah and false prophet. Jesus was not always successful as a healer. He feared his enemies and sought to evade them. There were marked contradictions in his teachings. What was worse, this Messiah neither would nor could deliver his nation. Judas' knowledge of Jesus' frailties blinded him to his many virtues. Since Judas had nothing against his fellow-disciples, to protect them against arrest he himself accompanied the Jewish police to the Garden of Gethsemane and pointed out the wanted man.

Once arrested, Jesus was put on trial first before the Sanhedrin, then before Herod Antipas, and finally before Pilate. Klausner maintains that the hearing before the Sanhedrin was not a legal trial but simply a preliminary investigation. Jesus taught nothing which by the rules of the Pharisees rendered him criminally guilty, even a claim to be the Messiah. The Sadducees were in control of the Sanhedrin, however, and the high priestly house of Annas was roundly condemned even in the Talmud. For the Sadducees, messianic movements were dangerous owing to their disturbing effect on political conditions. When Jesus admitted he was the Messiah his fate was sealed. Klausner thinks the trial before Herod Antipas is unhistorical and wholly disbelieves the Gospel account of Pilate's opposition to the crucifixion. The Roman procurator was a cruel tyrant to whom the killing of a single Galilean was no more than the swatting of a fly.

On the cross Jesus realized that God was not coming to his help, would not release him from his agony and would not save him with a miracle. Vanished was his life dream! In terrible anguish he cried out in Aramaic in the language of the book he loved most: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In

Klausner's view, the words from the cross mentioned in Luke and John are legendary.

Joseph of Arimathea put the body of the dead Messiah in a rock-hewn tomb and later at the close of the Sabbath removed it to an unknown grave. Some of the ardent Galileans subsequently saw their crucified lord in visions which became the basis for Christianity. Could the Jewish nation found its belief on such a corner-stone, the Zionist professor asks incredulously?

D. Morton Scott Enslin

From Klausner it is instructive to see not only the depth of the dichotomy between tremendous messianic expectations (some would say exaggerated) and the reality of what a personal messiah might do and say, but also to see the difficulties and agonies that such a mission would bring upon the person in that position as well as the people who had to recognize him.

While Enslin is a Protestant author, he is no less militantly critical of popular interpretations of the Biblical narrative than the Zionist Klausner. He has written a standard seminary textbook on New Testament life and literature and has provided an American contribution to the controversy over the historical Jesus. As professor at Crozer Theological Seminary he illustrates how easily a skeptical treatment of the Gospel sources could be accepted within the confines of American institutional church life in 1950—by contrast with the general theological conservatism of a century earlier. In *The Prophet from Nazareth,* Enslin espouses his theology.[6]

He asserts that we have no reliable information of Jesus' birth and early years except that he was a native of Nazareth. The infancy stories of Matthew and Luke are legends like those surrounding the birth of Augustus, Alexander the Great, Cyrus or Plato. In addition, it was customary to say of a great man that a god sired him. For Enslin the stories about the massacre of the innocents and the visit of the twelve-year-old boy at the temple are

[6] M. Enslin, *The Prophet from Nazareth,* McGraw-Hill, N.Y., 1961.

equally unhistorical.

Continuing in this vein, he claims that the year of Jesus' birth is unknown and we cannot be sure that he was thirty when he began his ministry. This figure is possibly derived from the Old Testament where Joseph and David were thirty when they came to power. Further, there is no real evidence as to the length of Jesus' preaching; probably Mark is right in making Jesus' public career brief and that his first visit to Jerusalem was his last—the Fourth Gospel which suggests a three-year ministry is worthless so far as chronology is concerned. Thus far, Professor Enslin merely follows common opinion among some Biblical scholars.

Unlike his colleagues, however, he doubts that there was any connection between Jesus and John the Baptist. The later Church brought John into the Christian picture and provided him with the role of forerunner to attract followers of the Baptist to the Christian movement. Besides, by making John the precursor for the greater Jesus, Christians could answer Jewish opponents who declared Jesus could not be the Messiah because there had been no return of Elijah.

According to Enslin, the later Church paid tribute to the Nazarene carpenter by calling him Christ, Son of God, Lord and Logos, but his original disciples thought of him simply as "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19), which is what Enslin maintains he was and all he claimed to be. He uses Biblical passages to illustrate this supposition. When he was being mocked by his captors, the guards taunted Jesus with the words: "Prophesy to us" (Matt. 26:48, Mark 14:65, Luke 22:64). At the dinner in which a harlot anointed Jesus, the Pharisaic host complains, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:36-50). Jesus says of his own ministry: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country. . ." (Mark 6:4) and ". . .it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).

In the earliest stratum of tradition, Jesus therefore calls himself a prophet. Friends and foes agreed that he acted like a man

"possessed". According to his followers he was possessed with the spirit of God and was therefore the actual mouthpiece for Yahweh. For his critics, he had been seized by evil spirits and was the spokesman for Beelzebub. Probably Jesus would have explained his calling in terms of a prediction attributed to Moses in the book of Deuteronomy (18:15):

"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you. . . ."

Jesus preached that the bell had at last sounded and the age to come would soon appear. For Enslin, few things seem more certain than the belief of Jesus in the near approach of the apocalyptic kingdom. Going further, Enslin claims that the common people heard Jesus gladly, believed what he was saying and were not disillusioned by his death as a martyred prophet, in spite of Mark's insistence that almost no one understood Jesus and most deserted him. If Jesus had harsh words to say about the rich, the educated and the powerful, it was because they too understood him but opposed any change in the status quo. For many, however, any change would be a change for the better. Such people welcomed "the prophet of the age to come".

Did Jesus think of himself as the Son of David, the Messianic heir to the Davidic throne, or the Son of Man, the apocalyptic Judge of the New Age? That Jesus was in the slightest concerned with the re-establishment of David's throne would seem most unlikely, according to Enslin.

As for the title "Son of Man", it is highly probable that Jesus used the phrase constantly, though not referring to himself. His disciples eventually thought of him as the Son of Man but this identification was made after his death. As God's prophet Jesus was to prepare the way for the Final Judge, the apocalyptic Son of Man. For a first century Palestinian to believe in the near approach of the end of the world is possible; however, for him to toy with the idea that he, a flesh and blood human, could be transformed into a supernatural, angelic figure would indicate a pathological departure from normalcy.

Apparently most of Jesus' brief prophetic activity was in

Galilee, though he was probably in Jerusalem somewhat longer than five days before his execution. Even in Galilee, he had to make trips which according to Enslin, can only be explained as efforts to elude the police of Herod Antipas. However, Jesus did not flee Galilee because he was unpopular with the masses nor did he travel to the Holy City expecting to die. He may have thought the kingdom would dawn as he stood in Jerusalem and proclaimed his good news. So he walked south, confident that God was directing his steps and consummating His plan.

Enslin is very skeptical about the Gospel narratives concerning the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple. To ride into the city instead of dismounting and entering on foot would be a claim to kingly power which Rome would not likely have tolerated. Jesus did receive a noisy welcome from pilgrims and city dwellers alike—a kiss of death, actually, for it made clear the potential danger of a movement which might become uncontrollable. If the Pharisees and scribes had earlier been outraged by the "mouthing of an ignorant and untrained peasant", now Jesus incurred the enmity of the Sadducees and the suspicions of the Romans.

One can doubt that Jesus would be unmolested by the temple police after an act easily construed as wanton violence in a sacred shrine. Jesus probably passionately denounced what the temple had become and predicted its speedy destruction. The early Church turned these sayings into an "enacted parable". What Jesus *said* was transformed into what he *did*. Neither the temple guards nor Rome would have permitted an act similar to the account in the Gospels; but a blasphemous speech against the temple was enough in itself to seal the fate of the Galilean.

Because of his denunciations of the temple authorities, Jesus could easily be accused of being a Zealot. The details of the betrayal, arrest and passion are uncertain. The Mount of Olives arrest scene may be based on a somewhat similar incident in the life of David (II Samuel 15-16). The trial before Herod, unmentioned by Mark, may have been invented by Christian meditation on Psalm 2. That Jesus was arrested and speedily turned over to the

Roman procurator for condemnation is all we can be sure of; for Enslin, the details are forever lost in obscurity.

Pilate held office for ten years, a remarkable testimony to his ability when Tiberius kept a close watch on his agents and would not tolerate mismanagement. Of course, the fanatical prophet who had strayed into the Roman province and been arrested as a rabble-rouser provided only one more of many such troublesome incidents in the career of the Procurator. With little concern Pilate ordered Jesus to be crucified. Again, the details of the death scene are at best uncertain. On the cross, Jesus' confidence simply collapsed. God had failed him or he had failed God. The kingdom had not come!

The disciples fled back to Galilee but after this first grief and shock faded, they knew that Jesus was with God and would soon return. Their task was to carry on. The real Jesus was not dead but lived on in the hearts of those whom he endlessly calls. Out of that faith came visions of a risen Lord and legends of an empty tomb.

E. T.W. Manson

While German New Testament scholars busied themselves with the technicalities of form criticism and later redaction criticism,[7] British New Testament experts continued the "Quest for the Historical Jesus" which Albert Schweitzer had said would end with either thorough skepticism or consistent eschatology. Professor T.W. Manson of the University of Manchestser was one of the eminent critics who denied both of those troublesome possibilities. His views are found in *The Servant Messiah,* a series of lectures given at Yale and the University of Cambridge.

For the Jews the Messiah to come would be an irresistible, wise and just monarch, a conception clearly expressed in the Psalms of Solomon. He would be the agent of the triumph of God,

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[7] Form criticism produced the epoch-making books of Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* and Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition.* An introduction to and evaluation of redaction criticism can be found in Joachim Rhode, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists,* Westminster Press, 1968. Briefly, form criticism deals with *oral* tradition behind the written Gospels while redaction criticism analyzes the special interpretations given by each of the evangelists.

a victory of which all Jews would be the delighted beneficiaries. Thus, from the outset there was a violent contradiction between the crucified Jesus of Christian experience and the conquering hero of Israelite fancy.

John the Baptist struck the first blow against the national hope. By calling all to be baptized, a rite required of the Jewish proselyte, John declared that the chosen people were not a whit better than unclean pagans. They must rediscover and relearn their Judaism from the beginning. John destroyed the ordinary confidence of the average Jew in order to create a new and fit Israel for the Messiah. Jesus saw in the activity of the Baptist the manifest working of God. Hence he took his place in the Johannine movement while sensing how far he must go beyond it. Christians later borrowed their rites of baptism, fasting and common prayer from John.

In the temptation story and elsewhere Jesus completely contradicted the messianic hope of his nation—and his own disciples. Jesus puts God on center stage and makes the Messiah only His servant; the messianic office was transformed from the administration of divine justice into a labor of love: Jesus thought of himself as the servant par excellence of the kingdom of God. Thus Jesus combines the suffering servant of Deutero-Isaiah and the Son of Man in Daniel.

Baptism by John gave Jesus his sense of vocation. Yet unlike the Baptist, the Nazarene was no ascetic. More importantly, he identified himself with the outcasts and failures of life and opposed all the forces that oppressed them. He consoled his hearers with a wealth of kindness offered to them in God's name.

In Galilee Jesus exercised an irresistible fascination over the multitudes; but because of his popularity he became more and more suspect to the religious and political authorities. In brief he was placed in a dangerous position between the nationalistic zeal of his followers and the suspicious fears of Herod Antipas. In the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus felt the threat of an army without a general, a nation without a national leader, a maccabean host without a Judas Maccabaeus. Jesus had no intention of becom-

ing their king and so fled the country; he was more worried about the messianic enthusiasm of his friends than the fears of his enemies—this is why he repudiated Peter's idea that being Messiah means achieving power and glory.

Manson believes that as the Servant Messiah and therefore the embodiment of the true Israel, Jesus left Galilee to continue his ministry in the south in Judea and Peraea where there was nothing else for him to do but carry out his work in the old way with new surroundings. This Peraean period ended at the feast of tabernacles when Manson believes the cleansing of the temple took place. About six months later, from October to April, Jesus returned to the holy city for the last time.

Having entered Jerusalem amid cheers from his followers, Jesus cleansed the temple court of the Gentiles, which had been turned into a general marketplace. However, though his followers expected him to clear the Gentiles out of the holy city, he amazed everyone by driving out the Jewish traders. For them, this was certainly not a part of the conventional anticipation of messianic action.

Because of the disturbance at the marketplace during the feast of tabernacles, the Jewish leaders were determined to eliminate Jesus before the next festival at Passover. Manson says we cannot decide whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal or not, because Mark and the Fourth Gospel disagree. He thinks Judas betrayed Jesus because he was a fanatical Jewish patriot bitterly disillusioned by the Nazarene's spineless inaction in regard to Roman tyranny. And, like Klausner, he interprets the proceedings before the Sanhedrin as an informal inquiry rather than a legal trial. However, unlike Klausner and Enslin, who thought Pilate was a cruel tyrant to whom the killing of a Galilean was similar to killing a fly, Manson has Pilate thinking Jesus was harmless but giving in to the malicious Jewish leaders. Finally, the Servant Messiah was executed.

> And most of the people who had been concerned doubtless went to bed that night with a fairly easy conscience.

> Pilate had earned another day's salary as Procurator of Judaea; and his province was quiet and peaceful—at any rate on the surface. The Temple authorities could feel that they had made things secure against untimely reforming zeal—for the time being at least. Patriotic Jews could tell themselves that it had been a mistake ever to imagine that Jesus was the kind of leader they were looking for—and in that they were not mistaken. Devout Jews could reflect that such an end as that which had overtaken Jesus was hardly to be wondered at, after the way in which he had flouted the scribes and even criticised the provisions of the Law itself. We might almost say that Jesus was crucified with the best intentions; and that those who sent him to the Cross believed that they were doing their plain duty by the Empire or the Temple, or the Law or the hope of Israel. Doubtless many, perhaps most, of them did so believe.[8]

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Unification theology maintains that Jesus came in Adam's place to restore the lost Garden of Eden and to establish God's kingdom on earth. It likewise maintains that exaggerated notions and conflicting ideas about the precise meaning of the kingdom of God resulted in a vast gap between the actuality of his person and the abstract vision held by the religious in Israel. In this, we find that the essence of *Divine Principle* is supported by historical scholars and theologians alike. The question is, therefore, to what extent was the kingdom of God established, and to what extent were there failures and successes on the part of the Israelites themselves as well as the man whom God had chosen.

Jesus, like John, came preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." This proclamation itself has been the subject of interminable controversy among many Christians. The term

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[8] T.W. Manson, *The Servant-Messiah,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 87-88.

"kingdom of heaven" (which was substituted for "kingdom of God" because of Hebrew restrictions on the use of the word "God") has led them to believe either that Jesus was primarily concerned with the fate of the believer after death or that he is interested exclusively in one's private spiritual fulfillment. Most scholars would agree that either of these views entirely misrepresents the intent of Jesus' message, ministry and mission. This is quite clear in the representative views we have previously given as well as that of Bultmann, who maintains that the dominant theme in the message of Jesus is the imminent reign of God that would destroy the Satanic power.[9] Coming to the same conclusion but from a different perspective, Professor Frederick C. Grant typifies scholarly opinion:

> Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God is absolutely and unequivocally and exclusively a religious conception: purely and simply religious, but religious in the sound ancient sense, as embracing all of life, society, politics, the labor of men, as well as their inner feelings, attitudes, and aspiration.[10]

Though Professor Stauffer of Erlangen and Cambridge scholar C.H. Dodd may hold opposing views to the above, Unification theology reaffirms the contention of Bultmann that Jesus was convinced that the fulfillment of divine promise was at hand and therefore the rule of Satan was ending; consequently, he could demand a complete renunciation of lesser loyalties and obligations. Unification theology is also in agreement with the realistic picture of Jesus drawn by Schweitzer, whose exegesis initiated a tendency toward scholarly consensus in viewing the mission of Jesus in the light of his apocalyptic vision. *Divine Principle* likewise concurs with Tillich that

> The greatness of the New Testament is that it was able to use words, concepts and symbols which had developed

[9] R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Scribners, N.Y., 1951, v. I, pp. 4-5.
[10] F.C. Grant, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1940, p. xv.

> in the history of religions and at the same time preserve the picture of Jesus who was interpreted by them.[11]

That is to say, for *Divine Principle* the urgent and compelling apocalyptic vision spurred Jesus to promote the kingdom of God. He taught parables, and sent out disciples charged with the knowledge of the kingdom's immediacy. As Klausner and Enslin suggest, even though the man could not live up to the expectations of a desperate populace or fulfill the goals of the kingdom, even if at times he were dreamy or frustrated, this by no means negates the fact that for Israel he was indeed the Christ. Here again *Divine Principle* is supported by Tillich, who makes the following conclusion from his study of the New Testament symbols:

> The spiritual power of the New Testament was great enough to take all these concepts into Christianity, with all their pagan and Jewish connotations, without losing the basic reality, namely, the event of Jesus as the Christ, which these concepts were supposed to interpret.[12]

The kingdom that Jesus attempted to bring, was a literal, physical kingdom, according to Unification theology, a restored world based on God's original ideal. Central to that notion would be the immediate subjugation of Satan who had dominated man through the Fall, and the beginning of a new dawn on the individual, family, national and ultimately world levels. However, in his efforts, Jesus encountered barrier after barrier.

THE ZEALOT PROBLEM

Ever since the Babylonian Captivity, devout Jews dreamed of a restoration of their past glory. They conceived of the golden age in terms of a free Israel and Judah reunited under the wise government of a new King David. God would exercise His kingship over

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[11] P. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought,* Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1968, p. 16.
[12] *Ibid,* p. 16.

His chosen people through the instrument of a re-established Davidic dynasty. Mowinckel, among others, believes that such a this-worldly and political concept of the Messiah was the prevailing one among the masses of Palestinian Jews during the time of Jesus. As he explains, the hope of a greater national future appealed to popular feeling and aspiration, especially in troubled times when tempers flared because of alien rule, social problems, economic difficulties and disintegration of ancient religious customs. By contrast, the other-worldly and universalistic eschatology preserved in apocalyptic literature came from learned wisdom schools, interested in Chaldean speculations, non-Jewish religious traditions and mystical experiences. It is important to realize, however, that for many Jews the Messiah was thought of as a victorious general, a political liberator and a capable ruler.

Although a political Messiah plays no overt part in the Gospel picture, there are other sources to consult for a more complete understanding of the religious milieu of Jesus' time. The Psalms of Solomon, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the ancient synagogue prayers and early rabbinic literature all testify to national messianic ideas among the Jewish upper classes. In the most practical sense, such writings bear witness to the hope that from within Israel a Messiah will appear to raise the standard of national freedom, drive the Romans into the sea, restore the ancient throne of David and establish a durable government guaranteeing justice and peace. God will be King, according to this conception, when a wise monarch rules a free Israel.[13]

Therefore, it is easily seen that if Jesus were the Messiah, the expectations of his countrymen were in no way undemanding. Clearly, to satisfy and fulfill these goals as a human, he would have to face opposition from nearly every quarter. Equally distressing and problematic would be the situation if the above stated goals were *not* his real mission; in that case he would have to gain acceptance on another basis, which had not been so well imbedded in the fabric of their consciousness. Then he would be faced with

[13] S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh,* Abingdon Press, N.Y., 1954, pp. 280-284.

barriers even more severe.

However, if it were true that his essential mission was to restore the Davidic throne, many would say that the likelihood of Israel breaking the chains of Roman bondage was very small. The Sadducees, daily acquainted with Roman power, had shrewdly decided to make the best of a bad situation. The Pharisees remained aloof from practical politics but prayed for God to restore His rule with a miracle. Some of the Herodians felt that Herod the Great and his heirs provided the only kind of Messiah Israel could expect in the immediate future. Professor Grant concludes, "...only the utterly fanatical could still hope for a restoration of Jewish independence—or kingdom of David, or even a kingdom of the Maccabees."[14]

Yet there were just such people. They called themselves Zealots because of their unflinching loyalty to the cause of Jewish home-rule. Their opponents called them "bandits". Formed into an active group by Judas the Galilean, a noted rebel leader, the Zealots represented an important faction in Palestinian political life during and after Jesus' career. It might be added that history has shown that even less substantial political groups have risen to power, given a favorable turn in circumstance.

The Zealots believed in a kingdom of God on earth to be inaugurated by a Messiah who would lead his people against the Roman government. In 1931 Robert Eisler proposed the thesis, based on a reading of the *Slavonic Josephus,* that Jesus should be seen in the context of the Zealot revolutionary cause. His book *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* aroused considerable controversy, but the New Testament scholars almost unanimously dismissed it as a monument of mistaken scholarship. Twenty years later the whole subject was reopened and again excited widespread interest.

In a series of American lectures, Professor Oscar Cullmann of Basle gave his evaluation of the subject. He maintains that for an understanding of the New Testament the insurrectionist movement

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[14] F.C. Grant, *Ibid,* p. 111.

is of extraordinary significance because Jesus was executed by the Romans as a Zealot. To illustrate and expand his thesis, Cullmann uses examples from the New Testament. In the book of Acts (5:36) Gamaliel places Jesus in the same category as the Zealot leader Theudas. In Acts 21:38 Paul is accused of being a Zealot by the Roman tribune. Further, Jesus had Zealots around him in his inner circle: Simon the Canaanite, a disciple mentioned in Luke and Acts, was Simon the Zealot, the word "Kananaios" being an Aramaic designation for the Jewish resistance party; Judas Iscariot may mean Judas *sicarius,* the Latin word for the Zealots; and even Peter could have belonged to this group if "barjona" is an old Akkadian word meaning "terrorist"; and finally, Cullmann states that James and John, sons of Zebedee, exhibit Zealot tendencies.

However, instead of continuing that line of reasoning to claim that Jesus was one of the Zealots, Cullmann asserts that Jesus considered them Satanic in their confusion of the kingdom of God with earthly domination. Jesus undoubtedly displeased the Zealots. For one thing, he welcomed the hated tax-collectors into his movement. If he ridiculed oppressive political rulers who called themselves "benefactors" (Luke 22:25), he no less clearly praised the Roman centurion from Capernaum (Matt. 8:5). In addition, the question of tribute money involved the Zealots directly because they saw this as intolerable subservience to a pagan power; no Zealot could have been pleased with the clever way Jesus avoided entrapping himself. Cullmann believes that the injunction "resist not evil" is also directed against the Zealots and he conjectures that Jesus might have referred to them as false prophets who "come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Also, the statement in the Fourth Gospel, "All who come before me are thieves and robbers. . ." (10:8), could refer to the Zealots.[15]

On the other hand, S.G.F. Brandon of the University of Manchester labors valiantly to prove a positive connection between the Zealots and Jesus.[16] To do so he first has to show that

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[15] O. Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament,* Scribners, N.Y., 1956, p. 24.

[16] S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots,* Manchester University Press, England, 1967.

Mark quite deliberately rewrote early Christian history in order to remove Roman suspicions concerning the Church. Mark, prepared soon after the Flavian triumphal parade in Rome celebrating the defeat of the Jewish rebellion (71 A.D.), carefully differentiates the Christian cause from that of the discredited Jewish insurrectionists. Having set the pattern, Mark is merely copied by Matthew and Luke. Only by reading between the lines can one discover the natural affinities of primitive Jewish Christianity and first century Zealotism.

According to Professor Brandon, since Jesus was brought up in Galilee he would have been sympathetic toward those of his countrymen who had died fighting against Roman rule. He never criticized the Zealots by name as he did the Pharisees. Brandon considers that he even took the Zealot position on the question of the tribute money: Jesus declared that Israel's land and its resources belong to God alone, meaning that no Jew could give to Caesar that which belongs solely to God. (Mark reinterpreted this authentic saying in a pro-Roman manner.) Going further, in Brandon's reasoning, two incidents in Jesus' life make him look like a political Messiah: the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem he did so with a carefully planned demonstration of his Messiahship, knowing full well that such an act had political connotations. His subsequent attack on the temple trading system apparently took place at about the same time as a Zealot insurrection elsewhere in the city. For Jesus, the Jewish aristocracy in control of the temple appeared to be the chief obstacle to the preparation of Israel for the advent of God's kingdom. Jesus withdrew to Gethsemane accompanied by armed followers who could have offered serious resistance when he was arrested. At the end he fell victim to the counter-attack of the sacerdotal leaders who understandably regarded him as a danger to the establishment. Judged guilty of sedition, Jesus was crucified between two Zealots likewise paying the final penalty for revolt against Rome.

For Unification theology the Zealot problem was certainly a

central one. Because Jesus as the second Adam had to fulfill God's dispensation on the national level, *Divine Principle* would rather concur with Brandon's thesis that the Jewish aristocracy was a major obstacle for Jesus and had certain factions in the temple been overcome, the Zealots most likely could have been a part of, though not the guiding force in, a restored Israel. The contradiction which seems apparent in scholarly opinion is thus resolved: though on the one hand, Jesus appears to estrange himself from their cause (because the spiritual foundation was not laid), on the other hand, he does not overtly deny them or their cause (because if the proper foundation is laid, he is indeed the one they are waiting for).

But, of course, we have seen that a foundation was never laid. This problem is dealt with in our discussion of John the Baptist. Jesus was received with accusations, threats, and denunciations. Not only did the religious doubt Jesus, but also there is strong evidence that his own family thought him mentally incompetent. This estrangement was not his intention.

Nor was it his intention to die on the cross.

THEOLOGIA CRUCIS?

Because the man Pilate maliciously entitled the "King of the Jews" was killed, it has become exceedingly difficult to recognize what the mission of the Nazarene originally involved. On the one hand, some have overlooked the original Gospel *of* Jesus because it has been clouded by the gospel *about him* which came much later. That is, the shadow of the cross has often blocked out the ministry of the one announcing the imminence of the kingdom. Far too often Christians have assumed that Jesus came among men only to die. The structure of the Gospels themselves allows one to make this mistake; one scholar has observed that they are merely Passion stories with an extended introduction. Contributing to this misinterpretation are the epistles of St. Paul in which overwhelming emphasis is placed upon the death of Jesus. One of the chief benefits of the century devoted to the search for the real Jesus is that scholars have labored to get behind the writings of the New Testament to see the man from Nazareth. Modern research notes

that as time passes by in the chronological order of the Gospels the stark tragedy of the crucifixion is gradually covered up. In Mark, our oldest Gospel, Jesus utters a single agonizing cry from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (15:34). Even though Mark was probably written in Rome, the poignancy of that cry made such a lasting impression that the evangelist preserves it in the original Aramaic language spoken by Jesus. Matthew copies the same account without major alterations. Luke, however, omits the cry of agony and replaces it with the serene words: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (23:46). From a scene which evokes anguished despair, that recorded by Mark, the Third Gospel changes to a scene of confident acceptance. In John, the divine Christ proclaims from the cross in majesty, "It is finished." (19:30) Thus, as the Gospel writers succeed each other, any thought that Jesus might have considered himself a failure is discreetly expunged from the record. In fact, in the Syriac version of the scriptures used by the Nestorian and Jacobite Christians of the Near East, Mark itself has been altered to read not "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but "My God, my God, for this I was spared!"

In a series of papers prepared to honor Professor C.F.D. Moule of Cambridge we read:

> Why did Jesus die?... The early Christians believed that they understood the meaning of Jesus, and this controlled their answers to the question. They worked backwards *from* the answer *to* the question and said that Jesus died because it was God's will. They then retold the story complete with this theological explanation in order to illuminate for others the whole meaning of Jesus as they understood it. Whatever historical explanations they gave, such as the hostility of the religious leaders, the fickleness of the crowd and the weakness of Pilate, all of which contribute to the plausibility of their picture of an innocent man being condemned, are subservient to this theological explanation of the death of

> Jesus. This does not disprove the historical accuracy of what they relate, but it does cast a shadow of doubt over it.[17]

Divine Principle would affirm this common theological view. Again the words of Schweitzer are reiterated. This Jesus of Nazareth who "died to give his work its final consecration *never had any existence*."

To give an exemplary illustration of evidence to support this view, let us consider the argument that Isaiah 53 proves Jesus came to die. In the traditional interpretation of the mission of Jesus, Isaiah 53, one of the suffering servant poems, has been of enormous influence. When the early Church was collecting scripture passages from the Old Testament to prove that the Messiah should suffer it was natural to quote such verses. But scholarship of the most painstaking sort has failed to prove conclusively that the suffering servant poems were interpreted messianically in the time of Jesus. It would not be unnatural for Christians to use such passages because their Messiah did suffer, but in all probability Jews thought of the suffering servant as the historic nation of Israel rather than the Messiah. This, of course, does not necessarily rule out the idea that Jesus himself reinterpreted the conventional messianic concept in the light of the suffering servant poems after it became obvious to him that he might well be rejected by his nation in Jerusalem. T.W. Manson, among others, assumes this to be the case. Against him Hans Conzelmann writes:

> As for the title 'Servant of God', it is merely necessary to observe that it is entirely lacking in the oldest strata. Once it is taken up—in the latest stratum—it does not characterize Jesus as the suffering one, but as the 'savior' (Matt. 12:18ff). It is particularly striking that the later stratum of the Synoptic tradition occasionally, even though sparingly, works with Isaiah 53, but even

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[17] Robert Morgan in Ernst Bammel, ed., *The Trial of Jesus*, S.C.M. Press, London, 1970, p. 139.

> then not with the Servant-of-God title. In Matthew 8:17, even Isaiah 53:4 ('he took our infirmities. . .') is cited without any allusion to the Servant of God and the passion. For the assumption that Jesus understood himself as the Servant of God in the sense of Deutero-Isaiah, there is no support at all in the sources.[18]

Furthermore according to Mark, our oldest Gospel, Jesus did not speak of dying until the confession at Caesarea Philippi shortly before he headed for Jerusalem; from this and from the reasons given above, Unification theology assumes with modern scholarship that the theology of the cross was not the primary intention of Jesus though it quickly became the preoccupation of the Church. Jesus came that men might have life and have it more abundantly.

THE MESSIANIC MISSION

Divine Principle holds that through the Messiah, God had intended to establish His kingdom on earth beginning with the Israel of 2000 years ago. The Christ would govern the covenanted people of God with justice and righteousness as prophesied in Isaiah. Reigning with wisdom as a wonderful counselor, he would be a prince of peace able to guarantee an eternity of universal harmony.

This vision was not intended as otherworldly but as a project for living men in a new but earthly social order. In such a community the restoration of the original purpose of creation and the inauguration of the direct reign of God would require a far-reaching program involving action on every level—personal, family, national, global. In that kingdom, the spiritual fulfillment would be a part of the national fulfillment; so the kingdom would be neither purely private self-realization nor purely politically and nationalistically motivated.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul interpreted the mission of Jesus as the work of the New Adam (15:45). It was one

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[18] H. Conzelman, *Jesus,* Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1973, p. 46.

of those brilliant insights in Christology which quite regrettably was not taken up and elaborated upon when the next generation of Christians wrote their gospels. According to Unification theology, in becoming that New Adam, Jesus was to fulfill the divine mandate given to his original ancestor; that is, it was his mission to establish a God-centered personality, a God-centered family and a God-centered dominion.

To a certain extent, the Son of man and the man of perfected or God-centered personality are one. Professor Sigmund Mowinckel explains that in a measure the Son of Man is regarded as the ideal man. As such, he must be understood in the light of the ancient Near Eastern mythological figure, the divine Primordial man—the ideal representative and pattern for humanity. For Jews, the Son of Man appears as the ideal sage, the exemplary righteous individual, who enables man to fulfill the goals of God's creation; he is the pre-existent, heavenly ideal and pattern. In apocalyptic thought the Son of Man was considered the first of the righteous.[19] To the extent that the above definitions apply to the term "Son of Man," (noting that later in the Gentile Church of the first century, the same term stood for a notion more congenial to its philosophy), Jesus was indeed a fulfillment of the man of perfected personality, in the view of *Divine Principle*. This means that Jesus on the individual level became truly one with God, knew God's heart, and shared divinity.

Few in the Western world whose traditional structure has been built on the foundation of Judeo-Christianity would be so rash as to find fault with Jesus as an individual. As Emerson put it, Jesus ploughed his name into the history of the world. In a very real way, since the fourth century Jesus has summed up the meaning of human life for European civilization, much as Socrates did for Hellenic culture earlier, and Confucius did for traditional China. On the basis of his parables alone, the reader is attracted to his magnetic personality. In these short, pointed stories, one can see the basic but simple principles by which he lived, as well as the

[19] S. Mowinckel, *Ibid*, p. 385.

divine dimension from which they are inspired. As C.H. Dodd concisely puts it, Jesus was guided by implicit obedience to the will of God, trust in God which asks no proof, and dedicated allegiance to Him which excludes all lesser claims.[20] On the purely individual level, Jesus has in a certain sense proved himself by out-living his critics. Who today would remember Pilate or Herod, Annas or Caiaphas if they had not become involved in the career and destiny of one who towers far above them?

Beyond this point, however, God's desire and Jesus' ambitions were thwarted at every level.

According to *Divine Principle,* the new Adam should have united with a woman in the position of Eve, married with divine blessing and reared children who would provide the nucleus for a true family of God—that is to say, fulfilling in a God-centered fashion what man's ancestors fulfilled in a Satan-centered way. From that point the Messiah as the Last Adam and his bride as the restored Eve could move on to restore the whole creation to its pristine state, with the cooperation of a people willing to work to establish a second Garden of Eden.

Many conjectures have been made concerning the private life of Jesus. Professor William A.Phipps shows in a study of "the distortion of sexuality in the Christian tradition",[21] that Jesus himself has at various times been described as a celibate, a polygamist, a married man, a divorcee, a widower and a libertine. However, within the New Testament, it is not an uncommon conclusion that we can find no *direct* evidence to support any one of these conjectures.

Unification theology follows traditional doctrine in assuming Jesus to be an unmarried man, though it would go on to assert that had the proper conditions been made, he would have married. Because of his early death as well as failures within his family (Schweitzer said the family of Jesus thought him "mentally unbalanced"), he was unable to furnish the model for family life. If Jesus had not been forced to contend with abject opposition from

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[20] C.H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity,* Macmillan Co., N.Y., 1970, p. 124.
[21] W.A. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?,* Harper & Row, N.Y., 1970.

religious leaders, obtusiveness on the part of his disciples, and supreme skepticism from his family, would he have remained unmarried? If the Messiah as Son of Man is to be the model and pattern for all others in a celibate state, what meaning does it have for conjugal or family relationships? Clearly, the same logic that argues that Christianity "worked backwards *from* the answer *to* the question" has application in the matter of his married life as it does in the question of the inevitability of his crucifixion. For *Divine Principle* there is no reason to believe that Jesus as a Jew would not follow the traditional Jewish emphasis on the importance of the family—the strength in Judaism—by fostering a family which Dr. Phipps assures us would have been considered blessed by God.

To examine the career and intentions of Jesus on a higher level, that of national and world restoration, (which in part is necessary to understand the conditions which thwarted family level Messiahship) from the standpoint of Unification theology, it is helpful to refer back to an earlier comment of Dr. Brandon. He contended that the Jewish aristocracy in control of the temple appeared to be the chief obstacle to the preparation of Israel for the advent of God's kingdom. To understand why Jesus faced such a barrier in this aristocracy, *Divine Principle* affirms that in reality the people were not waiting for the Son of Man, but for another figure.

ELIJAH REVIVIDUS

In a series of lectures given at the University of Oslo, Professor Mowinckel explained the widespread Jewish belief that the Messiah was to be heralded by forerunners.[22] Since the coming of the Day of the Lord depended on whether Israel repented, it was necessary that there should first come men who would restore everything to right order. Left without prophets since the time of Malachi, Israel felt the need of inspiring men of God. Whom was it more natural to expect than Elijah who had been taken up into

[22] S. Mowinckel, *Ibid*, pp. 298ff, 305.

heaven alive? Such an idea, Mowinckel points out, can be found in Malachi 4:5, Ecclesiaticus 48:10 and the Book of Enoch. M.Goguel adds the Sibylline Oracles v:187-9 and IV Esdras 6:26ff.

We should note particularly that the return of Elijah was debated in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (circa 150 A.D.). Arguing with the Christian apologist, Trypho the Jew says, "Even if the Messiah should have been born and be living somewhere, yet he is unknown, indeed, he does not even know himself; nor has he any power, until Elijah comes, annoints him and reveals him to all."

Professor T.A. Burkhill of Cornell, in his study of the Markan Gospel,[23] mentions that rabbinic theology had at least three different views of the return of Elijah: 1) Elijah is a Gadite who prepares the way for God and is the redeemer of Israel; 2) Elijah is a Benjaminite who precedes the Messiah and announces His coming; 3) Elijah is a Levite who acts as the high priest in the messianic age.

Actually, Elijah was just the sort of holy man that many Jews at the beginning of the Christian era would have welcomed in Palestine. At a time when religious syncretism was favored by King Ahab, the prophet had waged a zealous campaign on behalf of the distinctive features of the traditional faith in Yahweh. This sort of exclusiveness would have appealed to a much later generation of Jews fearful of the encroaching hellenistic paganism of the Roman Empire. Elijah too as a desert saint was a vivid reminder of the early wilderness period in Israelite history when Moses received the Holy Torah at Mount Sinai. There were always Jews who looked upon their bedouin days as the golden age. Not least important in the eyes of first century Judaism was the blunt honesty with which Elijah denounced sin and corruption in high places. Who would not long for a similar man of God to speak frankly about the Herodian family, the Sadduceean temple aristocracy and

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[23] T.A. Burkhill, *Mysterious Revelation*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1963, p. 15.

the privileged classes collaborating with the Roman occupation authorities?

According to Mark and Matthew (who is said to have borrowed from Mark), John the Baptist modelled his life-style—even clothing—after Elijah the Tishbite. He adopted as his own the rough camel hair garb and leather belt which were the marks of the prophetic office since the reign of King Ahab. Luke and the Fourth Gospel omit this description, possibly because it meant little to the Gentiles in the growing church for whom they wrote.

Like Elijah, the Baptist poured fiery judgment upon the society around him. No one was safe from his withering denunciations. As herald of the one to come, John judged high and low without exception. Nor was his warning about the day of wrath merely vague rhetoric and apocalyptic dreaming. He spoke directly, pointedly, to the rich, the tax collectors, even the Jewish soldiers and the members of the Roman army of occupation. It was no wonder crowds gathered to hear the desert prophet. With unforgettable language, John handed down an indictment of every sector in the contemporary Palestinian social order.

John the Baptist plays a crucial role in understanding the dramatic mission of Jesus. Besides references to him in all four Gospels, we find him mentioned in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, the controversial *Slavonic Josephus*, some apocryphal Gospels and the religious literature of the Mandaeans, a still existing Iraqi sect which claims that John was superior to the founder of Christianity.[24]

Actually, while it may look as though we had considerable material to work with, the early sources do not agree with each other on very important matters, some appear to have embroidered details and all of them have been questioned as to their historical

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[24] A convenient handbook on John in Catholic tradition, his alleged power to cure St. Vitus dance (cholera), his place in art, his role as a holy saint, festivals in his honor and the history of relics like his head and fingers, has been prepared by the French author Jean Bergeaud. *Saint John the Baptist,* Macmillan N.Y., 1962.

reliability.[25] *Divine Principle* itself throws unexpected light on the ministry of the Baptizer which runs counter to the traditional Christian viewpoints, but is substantiated by modern historical scholarship.

The main problem with our sources is clear enough. To what extent are they reliable? Josephus, for example, in no way relates the preaching of John the Baptist to the agitation over the messianic problem confronting first century Palestine. Writing to commend Judaism to suspicious Romans, Josephus regularly played down such difficulties so the eschatological aspect of the Baptist movement was conveniently omitted. Christian sources, on the other hand, connect John with Jesus, subordinating the former to the latter in a way which arouses considerable suspicion. Each source has a particular bias and therefore we must be cautious in objective judgments; nor are there materials which come from inside the Johannine movement, but even they would be suspect. Therefore on matters relating to John, equally competent scholars disagree markedly.

In the opinion of most scholars, John was the notable leader of one of several sectarian groups emphasizing baptism in Judea. Of these, the people of the Qumran monastery, authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, represent a similar general orientation to that of John. Until the Dead Sea manuscripts were discovered the average Christian was unaware that besides official Judaism there was a variety of non-conformist Jewish sects roughly parallel to that led by John. Based in the Jordan Valley and the Judean wilderness, they represented a protest against the temple priesthood and rabbinic Judaism by emphasizing their zealous faith in a coming day of the Lord. Some practiced celibacy and vegetarianism. Some

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[25] In the Synoptic Gospels, John is regarded as the returning Elijah, whereas the Fourth Gospel makes him deny this. In the Synoptics John and Jesus came in contact only at the occasion of Christ's baptism whereas the Fourth Gospel asserts a period of working together. The Synoptics state that Jesus began his ministry after the arrest of John while this is specifically denied in the Fourth Gospel. John was probably more of an independent religious figure than the New Testament would have us believe. There is also a suspicion that John's message has been reinterpreted to make it look more Christian. So says Charles H.H. Scobie, *John the Baptist,* Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1964, pp. 15-16.

were hostile to the whole concept of temple sacrifices, and most were strongly influenced by Iranian religious views. The Essenes persisted for several centuries and may have provided a stimulus for the Mandaeans surviving today.

In the Bible, the Gospel of Luke presents somewhat parallel infancy stories for John and Jesus. It is the general consensus of New Testament critics that these were not originally part of the Third Gospel but were added at the time a second edition was prepared. The stories were created according to Old Testament models which could mean that they are secondary legends. Equally possible is the conjecture that Luke (or his redactor) attached to the Gospel a written Hebrew or Aramaic document. It has even been surmised that the Baptist infancy stories came from followers of John who treasured them much as disciples of Jesus collected birth narratives about their Master.[26]

According to the Johannine infancy narrative the Baptist was born to Zechariah, an aged priest, and his wife Elizabeth. Zechariah was not a member of the temple hierarchy but one of many rural priests whose sacrificial duties were limited to very occasional services at the Jerusalem shrine. Professor C.H. Kraeling of Yale in his book on John stresses that the rural priests had little in common with their temple colleagues and often harbored resentment against the way the religious establishment was managed. According to Luke, Zechariah and Elizabeth were deeply religious and that alone would set them off from the sophisticated, shrewd and often cynical hierarchy represented by the Sadducees in general and the High Priest Annas in particular. We know from the Dead Sea Scrolls that rural priests, presumably disaffected by

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[26] A popular New Testament Introduction states, "Chapter I of the Gospel of Luke deals with incidents that purport to relate the birth of John, but the reliability of this section has been seriously challenged. The section does show us, however, that John was an important enough figure to have become legendary, and it undoubtedly contains certain reliable historical data. . . . The section in Luke dealing with John's birth is part of a larger body of tradition about John that was no doubt originated and treasured by his disciples. On the basis of literary criticism, a strong case can be made to demonstrate that the two birth stories, one of Jesus and the other of John, were brought together by Luke or by a source on which Luke was dependent." (Howard Clark Kee & Franklin W. Young, *Understanding the New Testament*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1957, p. 79.)

the temple authorities, were held in high esteem in the Qumran community.

Even before his birth John was dedicated to the religious life. The Gospel says he took the vows of a Nazarite which included never cutting his hair or drinking wine. There is an old Christian tradition that John went to live in the desert at a very early age; Saint Augustine said at age seven. A modern conjecture is that he was adopted by one of the Essene communities. Another story, much older but not necessarily more reliable, claims that Zechariah was killed by angry soldiers because he helped his son flee to the wilderness before the massacre of the innocents.

The *Slavonic Josephus* describes John as looking like "a wild man". Luke claimed he lived on locusts and wild honey, in other words, whatever he might find in the hot, barren desert. The *Slavonic Josephus* insists he would not eat meat and lived on woodshavings. Such tales would have been popular in the heyday of Christian monasticism and some insist *Slavonic Josephus* is based on Byzantine sources written long after John had been transformed into a Christian saint.

Tradition says Zechariah and Elizabeth lived at the little village of Ain Karem about five miles from Jerusalem. John as an adult seems to have moved about from place to place on both sides of the Jordan but probably centered his activities at the ford in the river, southeast of Jericho and near the north end of the Dead Sea. The area was desolate enough for one who wanted to be alone with God, yet there were always caravans crossing the Jordan so that a preacher of righteousness could find hearers for a message of fiery doom.

Josephus and the Gospels agree that the wilderness prophet did attract crowds. Unfortunately, we have no examples of his preaching. Instead of lengthy sermons which John must have addressed to his followers and the curious, the historian has at his disposal only bare summaries of his message or a few vivid sentences which happened to be remembered.

Mark stresses John's main point: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." A few colorful details are provided in the early

collection of sayings which scholars call Q and date as early as 60 A.D. According to Q, the prophet warns of the impending day of judgment in terms of a "wilderness fire in which dry grass and scrub can blaze for miles, sending animals such as scorpions and vipers scuttling for safety."[27] Already God has His axe in hand and is about to chop away. Even now He is winnowing the grain from the chaff. One can hear John angrily shout "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7b)

The desert prophet linked his sermons of doom with the need for baptism in the waters of the Jordan. The Gospels speak of baptism of repentance for remission of sins; this would link John with the understanding of the sacrament in the Christian Church. Josephus in the *Antiquities* wrote,

> John was a pious man, and he was bidding the Jews who practiced virtue and exercised righteousness toward each other and piety toward God to come together for baptism. For thus, it seemed to him would baptismal ablution be acceptable, if it were used not to beg off from sins committed, but for the purification of the body when the soul had previously been cleansed by righteous conduct.[28]

Though the Gospels interpret the Johannine rite in terms of Christian initiation, the explanation of Josephus is more like the practice of ablution in the Essene communities.

As an eschatological preacher John may well have thought that his baptism provided the covenanting ceremony for the new Israel of the coming Messiah—an initiation for the true chosen people of God. Scobie concludes:

> Both John and the sectarians agree that membership of the old Israel is not enough, and in itself is no guarantee of salvation. For the sectarians, Israel had apostasized,

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[27] Scobie, *Ibid,* p. 60.
[28] *Antiquities* XVIII, 5, 2.

> and for John, those Jews who came to hear him preach were a brood of vipers, who must not think that they can place any reliance on their descent from Abraham. Following the analogy of the Qumran baptism, we can say with confidence that John's baptism too must have been thought of as admitting people to the eschatological community.[29]

In order to understand the problems associated with the Baptist's relationship to Jesus, the student must examine the various New Testament sources one by one.

Q, used by Matthew and Luke, contains nothing about his baptism. In Mark and Matthew, following the accounts of John, Jesus appears abruptly on the scene. Personal contact between the two is reduced to the absolute minimum. Jesus comes to be baptized. As soon as that occurs the two men part never to meet again. In Mark, our earliest Gospel, Jesus alone hears the voice from heaven. Mark does not relate John's question from prison, "Are you the one who is to come or shall we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3). So in our oldest Gospel there is no suggestion at all that John wondered if Jesus were the long-awaited Messiah. Q, however, does contain this question but not the baptism, so for that editor John had not genuinely considered the possible messianic status of Jesus until he himself had been imprisoned by Herod Antipas.

Matthew, Luke and the Fourth Gospel bring the Baptist and the Christian Messiah together in different ways. Matthew makes John object to the idea of baptizing Jesus. Luke describes Jesus and John as cousins—or at least kinsmen—and has the Baptist acknowledge the superiority of Jesus before either were born. The Fourth Gospel has the Baptist hail Jesus as the Son of God and the Lamb of God, titles much more appropriate in the later Church. Beginning with Mark, the Baptist is pictured as the resurrected Elijah, yet the Fourth Gospel explicitly denies this role which the older evangelists have taken considerable pains to prove. From these

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[29] Scobie, *Ibid,* p. 144.

brief observations made by historical critics who have carefully examined the extant record, one can clearly see that a large measure of reconstruction is necessary in order to make sense out of conflicting ancient testimony.

The most popular view assumed that Jesus was attracted to the Baptist movement after its fame had spread to Galilee; he presumably heard of it as he travelled in the Judean wilderness area on the long route from Nazareth to Jerusalem. When he went out to hear John for himself, he became so moved by what he saw that he himself joined the crowd seeking baptism. Some Christians in the early Church, the Adoptionists, believed that Jesus became aware of his own messianic calling when he was immersed by John in the waters of the Jordan. Possibly for a time Jesus was actually affiliated with the Baptist movement and there may even have been an agreement with John that he would carry out in Galilee what the Baptist had in the Judean desert. According to this view, Jesus did not strike out on his own until John was imprisoned.

This scholarly reconstruction has won the support of Ethelbert Stauffer.[30] Relying on the chronology of the Fourth Gospel, he claims that Jesus cleansed the temple early in his mission when he was a radical follower of the Baptist. Scobie too accepts the theory that John and Jesus had a period of overlapping ministries. When John conducted a mission among the Samaritans, Scobie supposes that Jesus carried on for the Baptist in Judea. When John returned to his old haunts in the Jordan Valley, Jesus went up to Galilee. Scobie suggests that the two gradually came to a parting of the ways over the various Jewish rites of ritual purity. Jesus was simply not strict enough to stay in John's favor.

Unification theology claims that Jesus's own work was badly crippled by the fact that he did not win the enthusiastic endorsement of John. In the light of the enormous difficulties faced by any messianic movement in first century Palestine, there was no real chance for success if the forces for reconstruction remained divided. From the standpoint of the messianists, rivalry within the

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[30] E. Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story,* Knopf, N.Y., 1960, pp. 63-68.

ranks could prove to be fatal.

As we look back over the story, it seems transparently clear that a forthright and unqualified endorsement of Jesus by the Baptist would have turned the tide in Jesus' favor. From the Christian viewpoint and in the light of history, John's mission apart from Jesus should have culminated with the baptism of the Nazarene carpenter's son. He thereupon should have joined Jesus and become his disciple. Had John followed Jesus after baptizing him and thrown all of his support on his side, the course of world history might well have been altered in the most dramatic fashion.

The objective historian can easily gauge the difficulties facing a first century Jewish Messiah. Palestine was occupied by Roman soldiers and governed by Roman officials or their puppets. The Sadducees in control of the temple and the privileged classes were collaborationists either out of conviction or to further their immediate interests. The Pharisees concentrated on purely religious matters. The Essenes abandoned the society around them expecting an eschatological miracle on the part of God to vindicate His Chosen People. As for the Zealots or political freedom fighters, they were committed to sporadic acts of terrorism which culminated in the disastrous uprising bloodily suppressed in 70 A.D.

John and Jesus alike depended upon the deep-seated religious hope for a coming reign of God and widespread popular unrest over conditions as they existed. But beyond that John had certain distinct advantages which could have greatly benefited Jesus. He undoubtedly had many sympathizers in the priestly class. His strictness surely attracted a considerable portion of the Pharisees, and it is likely that he could have rallied much of the Essene community to his side. Because of his preaching he was well-known and favorably regarded in Judea and Samaria, whereas Jesus' supporters came largely from Galilee to the north. By throwing all of his support behind the Nazarene, the Baptist could have provided the base for a nation-wide program of renewal and reconstruction. In fact, even Sadducees and Herodians might have shifted their allegiance to such a messianic movement and against the occupation forces if the outlook appeared favorable for the

reformers—thus removing the opposition in the temple hierarchy.

Maurice Goguel in his *The Life of Jesus* claims, "after Jesus had left him John only saw in him an unfaithful disciple and almost a renegade."[31] The refusal of the Baptist to ally himself with Jesus —whatever the circumstances—in the view of *Divine Principle,* was not only crippling to the Messianic programme of the Galilean, but likewise dimmed the future of John. As is recorded, John was imprisoned and executed by Herod Antipas.[32]

In the *Divine Principle* view, it is suggested that the reasons John could not come to support Jesus were all too human. On the one hand, supporting Jesus would mean almost giving up his own following and accepting a position of lower esteem in the eyes of his disciples and the public, though this need not necessarily have been the case. Had John united with Jesus, they would have increased or decreased together. Furthermore, John may have had doubts about some of the things that Jesus espoused; critical and apologetic theologians alike have conceded that the sayings of Jesus were quite out of the ordinary, in many cases alienating his listeners by seeming to contradict the orthodox stance. Further, John may have compared himself to Jesus; and from that gathered that the Son of Man could not be all that human—of questionable birth, dubious education,and without a well-developed following. For *Divine Principle,* John himself, coming in the position of Elijah, was responsible for that following.

It is debatable whether John thought of himself as Elijah. Christians who believe that he did run up against the considerable authority of Albert Schweitzer. In his classic study, he asks, "Why did not the Jews take the Baptist to be Elijah?"; and answers, one, he never made such a claim; two, he performed no miracles or exercised supernatural powers; and three, John himself pointed

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[31] M. Goguel, *The Life of Jesus,* Geo. Allen & Unwin, London, 1958 ed., p. 279.

[32] Accounts of the circumstances surrounding that execution differ. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Herod Antipas feared that the Baptist might spark an uprising. Mark, however, preserves a colorful story which is dealt with interestingly in A.E.J. Rawlinson's *The Gospel According to St. Mark;* the story revolves around John's becoming enmeshed in Palestinian politics and the personal affairs of Herodias and her husband.

forward to the coming of Elijah. In a unique declaration, Schweitzer proposed that the one to come about whom the Baptist preached was in reality not the Messiah, but Elijah.[33] Scobie replied to this that the idea of John being the forerunner of the forerunner is rather far-fetched. However that may be, if John did conceive of himself in the role of Elijah, he neither anointed Jesus, nor revealed him, nor encouraged widespread acceptance of him as the Messiah. It is very possible that there was some confusion in John's mind as to what position he held. If he were united with the Messiah, no such confusion would have existed, in the view of *Divine Principle*.

In Schweitzer's opinion, Jesus conceived of John the Baptist as Elijah revividus. He points that out in a discussion of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples that occurred during the descent from the mountain of transfiguration as is recorded in Mark:

> That is to say, the conditions thereof, so far as they (the disciples) can see, are not yet fulfilled. Elijah is not yet come (Mk 9:11). Jesus puts their minds at rest with the hint that Elijah had already appeared though men did not recognize him. He means the Baptist (Mk 9:12, 13).[34]

If the disciples' minds are restless and they are doubtful that Elijah has come and revealed Jesus as the Holy One, then how much more difficult would it be for the general populace to accept Jesus?

Conclusion

Earlier, representative views from major New Testament scholars were presented concerning the mission of Jesus. Then, we

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[33] *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 371-372. A similar opinion has been maintained by G.S. Duncan, *Jesus, Son of Man* and John A.T. Robinson; cf. Scobie, *Ibid*, pp. 74-75.

[34] A. Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, Schocken Books, N.Y., 1964, pp. 202-203.

considered the extent of his success. Unification theology stresses the fact that conflicting concepts of the coming kingdom created a chasm between the expectations of the people of Israel and the actual work of the central figures in dispensational history. However,that tremendous dichotomy need not have caused the tragic crucifixion. Paul Tillich, in an exquisitely cautious manner, well describes that dichotomy in his discussion of the adequate and inadequate meanings of the terms Messiah and Son of Man:

> This symbol (the Messiah) was applied to Jesus by the early disciples, perhaps at the very beginning of their encounter with him. This was a great paradox. On the one hand it was adequate, because Jesus brings the new being; on the other hand it was inadequate, because many of the connotations of the term "Messiah" go beyond the actual appearance of Jesus. . . .
>
> The same thing is true of the "Son of Man" concept. On the one hand it is adequate, and perhaps used by Jesus himself, for it points to the divine power present in him to bring the new aeon. On the other hand, it is inadequate because the Son of Man was supposed to appear in power and glory.[35]

Divine Principle suggests that had John united with Jesus, he could have greatly strengthened the latter's cause and helped to correct mistaken messianic conceptions, especially making inroads in the Pharisee community. Furthermore, the Baptist could have attested to the authority of Jesus and used his influence to create that glory and power which Jesus until the last still expected to be manifested. John and Jesus together could have even rechanneled Zealot enthusiasm into a positive force. The tremendous anticipation of messianic joy and hope that had kept the nation together through bitter trials could have exploded into unequalled spiritual glory had Jews but realized that their Elijah and their

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[35] Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought,* Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1967, pp. 14-15.

Messiah were in their very midst. Such power would have been irresistible, particularly if Jesus had been allowed to live out his natural years!

For *Divine Principle,* this would not be considered far off in the light of how God had been preparing His chosen nation and the central figures in His dispensation of restoration. The realization of such hopes are inherent in the story of those people, their aspirations and their times.

Then, the nation was ripe for the Messiah, ripe for someone to pray "Thy Kingdom *is* coming, Thy Will *is* being done."

> Scarcely a year went by during this century (67 B.C. to 39 A.D.) without wars or other disturbances; wars, rebellions, outbreaks and riots, and all of them with their concomitant of incessant bloodshed, and this state of things prevailed in the Land of Israel throughout the whole epoch which preceded Jesus and prevailed also during his lifetime. . . .[36]

In the light of these conditions the vision of the Son of Man's path was etched in his mind:

> Jesus, like all those of his own nation who were really in earnest, was profoundly conscious of the great antithesis between the kingdom of God and that kingdom of the world in which he saw the reign of evil and the evil one. This was no mere image or empty idea; it was a truth which he saw and felt most vividly. He was certain, then, that the kingdom of the world must perish and be destroyed. But nothing short of a battle can effect it. With dramatic intensity, battle and victory stand like a picture before his soul, drawn in those large firm lines in which the prophets had seen them. At the close of the drama he sees himself seated at the right

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[36] J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth,* Macmillan, N.Y., 1943, p. 167.

> hand of the Father, and his disciples on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; so objective was this picture to him, so completely in harmony with the ideas of his time.[37]

Again, according to *Divine Principle,* the awesome possibility of the dawn of the messianic age in power and glory may well have been more than a possibility. However, on the national level the Messiah was not received and the human conditions necessary to be set by Jesus were not, or could not be met. Without support, Jesus could not hope to lay a foundation for a godly kingdom. For this reason, the international level of restoration, also to be fulfilled through God's chosen one, must rest on conjecture alone. Very quickly after Jesus' death, Christianity moved to the world stage and caught hold as if it too were prepared to receive a Christ. However, on that world stage was a deeply anxious Christianity, waiting for his second advent with an implicit feeling that the first time he had left so much undone and left so much unsaid; the critical moral and theological problem for first generation Christians was thus the delay of the Parousia.

In spite of his untimely death and the ensuing age-long wait for his return in glory "Jesus is something to our world because a mighty stream of spiritual influence has gone forth from him and has penetrated our age also. This fact will never be shaken nor confirmed by an historical knowledge."[38]

And this spiritual power comes through one who was caught in a labyrinth of his own, his fellow Jews' and his nation's making—

> The Baptist appears, and cries: 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history

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[37] A. Harnack, *What is Christianity,* Harper Torchbook, N.Y., p. 53.

[38] A. Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God,* p. 29.

to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn, and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still.[39]

[39] A. Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 368-369.

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