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THE MESSIANIC ROLE OF JESUS AND THE TEMPTATION NARRATIVE: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE (*concluded*)

by J. ANDREW KIRK

IN the first instalment of this paper, published in our January-March issue, Professor Kirk examined the current portrayal of our Lord as the patron of revolutionary insurgence, and in particular embarked on a study of the temptation narrative in its social and political setting. Having considered the first temptation, he now goes on to pay attention to the second and third, and then sums up his conclusions.

THE second temptation (third in Luke) also indicates a challenge to Jesus to act in a certain way. It is the only one of the three temptations in which Jesus would be involved in a public demonstration or manifestation.⁵⁶ The pinnacle of the temple in the holy city would have been deliberately chosen because it would be the centre of attraction for a great concourse of people. However, the force of the temptation is not only contained in the fact that this would be a dramatic attempt to get popular recognition of His messianic status⁵⁷ but rather that the action would be performed in an area of very great Zealot activity. The central issue is not so much that Jesus is being challenged to act in a way that is designed to gain the maximum personal publicity, thus virtually buying His public recognition, but rather to attract the attention of those most

⁵⁶ This may be the reason why Luke places it last. It becomes the most fitting prelude to his public ministry.

⁵⁷ Ps. 91: 11 was understood to apply to the Messiah who would, according to a late Jewish midrash, which may go back to the first century, "stand on the roof of the holy place" (Pesikta R 36. 162a).

likely to take note of such a manifestation.⁵⁸

The difficulty of interpreting this temptation solely in terms of its Deuteronomic background has been admitted.⁵⁹ If it were to be interpreted in terms of the contrast between the faithlessness of Israel, who tempted God, and the faithfulness of the Son who remained in a position of absolute trust, then the actual quotation from Deuteronomy which reflects the episode of the manna (Ex. 17: 1-7; Num. 20: 1-13) would better fit the first temptation. To see this second temptation in terms of Israel forcing God to grant them a miracle (sign) is to impose a ready-made interpretation on the text.

If the choice of desert and temple is not arbitrary then we are forced, by a true historical methodology, to take seriously what these two places would have signified in the time of Jesus.

There seems to be a significant difference between the account of the temptation as given by Matthew and as given by Luke. Luke refers to Jerusalem by name; Matthew, perhaps in accord with the theme of royalty which plays an important part in his gospel, calls it ἡ ἁγία πόλις (cf. Matt. 5: 35), the city which is sanctified by the presence of God and, as a result of the occupying forces, desecrated. The temptation then takes on a new dimension. The

⁵⁸ On Zealot activity in the temple area, cf. Brandon, *op. cit.*, p. 58. One might say that after the desert the temple area was of extreme importance as an area for insurrectional activity. It is not surprising that some, e.g. Eisler, *op. cit.*, and Brandon, *op. cit.* pp. 331-6, have thought of the expulsion of the merchants from the temple by Jesus as a kind of prelude to a messianic armed revolt. Certain references in the Gospels might seem to support such a thesis. On the other hand careful studies by V. Eppstein, "The Historicity of the Gospel account of the Cleansing", *Z.N.W.*, lv (1964), pp. 42-58; and E. Trocmé, "L'Expulsion des Marchands du Temple", *N.T.S.*, 15 (1968-9), pp. 1-22, have shown that such a thesis, though attractive, has to ignore a consistent variety of contrary evidence. Two facts particularly tell against the thesis. In the first place there is no evidence that Jesus' activity was directed against the occupying forces of Rome. His action is readily explicable in terms of a "zeal for the law" which constantly distinguished between the written law, which He obeyed, and the oral law, which He challenged. The act was a revolutionary act against one manifestation of the corruptness of a religion which had turned responsibility into privilege at its very centre. In the second place, although Jesus' action was violent, all the evidence goes against the supposition that He would have resorted to armed insurrection. His attack was directed against the corruptness of the church not against the state. It is surely significant that after the triumphal entry it was to the temple and not to the Fortress of Antonia that He went.

⁵⁹ J. Dupont, *op. cit.*, p. 290; E. Best, *op. cit.*, p. 6, is inclined to dismiss the allusion completely.

dramatic action of casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple would be a sign to the nationalists, in fulfilment of certain messianic expectations, and also as a protest against the uncleanness caused by the presence of the foreign power.

Here again the temptation to assume the rôle of a Davidic Saviour-Messiah would have been very strong. The city is holy. The city is the city of David. The city is now polluted. David originally drove out the inhabitants in order that the city might be a fit residence for the Lord.⁶⁰ The Son of David ought to do the same. The significance of the quotation by Satan of Psalm 91: 11-12 is not that part of the quotation is omitted (which does not, in any case, alter the meaning very greatly); nor that Satan now tries using Scripture to test Jesus, but rather that the main thrust of the Psalm forbids the kind of action which Satan contemplates, because it envisages a situation in which the righteous do not try to force the hand of God but rather trust God implicitly in every situation to act in accord with His character as God. The Lord will deliver the righteous man when he finds himself in a situation from which he cannot escape by himself, because "he cleaves to me in love"; because "he knows my name", and because "he calls to me" —not because he deliberately puts himself in a situation from which the Lord has to rescue him to maintain the honour of His name.

The reply of Jesus, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God"⁶¹ emphasizes this note of forcing the hand of God which is rightly described as temptation. The context of the quotation is quite clear, "you shall not put the Lord your God to the test, *as you tested him at Massah.*" The incident at Rephidim clearly demonstrates the fact that the hand of God was forced. The people neither waited upon the Lord to supply their need nor did they call upon the Lord in confidence that he would act. Instead they complained (Meribah) to Moses and, even more, they threatened to kill him whom the Lord had anointed as their leader (Ex. 17: 17). God was forced to act in order to defend his honour with regard to his chosen servant.

The application of the two strands of the temptation in the known historical situation of Jesus is what gives the temptation its force. On the one hand there is the sacredness and inviolability of the holy city which is at stake. On the other hand there is the

⁶⁰ Cf. II Sam. 5: 6-10; 24: 15ff.

⁶¹ Deut. 6: 16, LXX, the singular form of the verb against the plural of the MT in order to apply the quotation specifically; cf. R. H. Gundry, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

temptation, in the words drawn from Ps. 91, to force the hand of God by dramatic action. Putting the two together we are bound to conclude that the temptation was that Jesus should interpret his messianic rôle in a politically activist way, moving from the desert to the holy city in order to manifest himself as a sign to those ready to follow him in the driving out of the new group of Jebusites.⁶²

Jesus clearly rejects this possibility, which Satan puts to Him, as a misuse of His relationship with God and as a lack of true confidence in God who had shown Him another path.⁶³

The final temptation (second in Luke) is of the three the one which most obviously has a messianic reference. We would not, as a result, necessarily be right in treating it as such unless the context itself demands it. B. Gerhardsson, for example, prefers to see the temptation narrative within the framework of the Son of God's obedience to the *Shema*. The temptation is a testing as to whether the Son loves his Father as God's Son ought to do.⁶⁴ Thus the third temptation in Matthew is interpreted strictly in terms of idolatry. Jesus rejects this temptation, demonstrating that He will not allow

⁶² The significance of the palm branches (Matt. 21: 8-11 and par.; John 12: 13) may well indicate that the crowds considered Jesus as a new representative of the Maccabean resistance movement, cf. W. R. Farmer, "The Palm Branches in John 12: 13", *J.T.S.*, n.s., 3 (1952), pp. 62ff.

⁶³ It would take another study to go into the possible implications which this rejection of a Satanic temptation had for the attitude which Jesus demonstrated at another crisis point in his life, that of Gethsemane. The same temptation to adopt a messianic political rôle was presented to him (Matt. 26: 51-4). The saying, "all who take the sword will perish by the sword", could well be a reference to Zealot activity, or more probably, to the activity of the extreme pressure group within their ranks, the *sicarii*. The reference to "more than twelve legions of angels" could be connected with the second temptation, i.e., Jesus could still force the hand of God by armed intervention, "he will give his angels charge over you", (cf. DSW. i. 9-11; xii. 1-7). The reference to ἀγγέλους (Matt. 26: 55) in the light of the use of the word in Josephus to refer to the leaders of armed revolts against Rome could imply that the chief priests and elders of the people saw Him in this role or were openly tempting Him to play it; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 162-5, 172; *B.J.* ii. 254-7, 264. Finally the note at the end of the paragraph, "then all the disciples forsook him and fled", could well imply that they too, having expected something else from the mission of Jesus, deserted Him, convinced that they could not participate in his view of how the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Matt. 26: 54, 56); cf. O. Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (1955), pp. 39ff.

⁶⁴ Cf. *The Testing of God's Son (Mt. iv. 11 and par.): an analysis of an early Christian midrash* (1966), and, "The Parable of the Sower and its Interpretation", *N.T.S.*, 14 (1967-8), pp. 170-1.

mammon to separate Him from God. Thus he shows that he loves God "with his whole might".

We can agree that this may be the basic thrust of the temptation, i.e. the testing of the genuineness of the Sonship of Jesus. However what interests us throughout this study is the concrete context in which the temptations occur. The testing of Jesus was not merely as to whether He was God's Son or not, but in what way, with what end, and through what process, He would demonstrate this Sonship. Love and obedience do not mean anything unless they are exercised within given situations. It is the contention of our study, so far, that the testing takes place within the context of certain false ideas of Messiahship and that the whole force of the temptation lies in the fact that Jesus had to make a very far-reaching decision at the beginning of his ministry as to how he would interpret the Bath Qol of his baptism.

In the third temptation we notice by far the greatest divergence between the accounts given in Matthew and Luke,⁶⁵ In the other two temptations, with the exception of the addition of τοῦ διαφυλάξαι σε in Luke 4: 10, Matthew has the longer account. In the third temptation Luke has added some very interesting details.

Some will say that Luke has missed the simplicity and force of the temptation.⁶⁶ However we cannot say this *a priori* until we have made a comparative study. In the first place we notice that Matthew records that the place of the third temptation was a high mountain (Luke only has ἀναγαγὼν αὐτὸν ἐδειξεν αὐτῷ κτλ which suggests that for him the place was not important but only what was seen⁶⁷); this is important in the scheme of Matthew as can be seen particularly from the climax of the Gospel (28: 16ff.; compare 5: 1 and 17: 1). The fact that on the Mountain of Ascension Christ can claim, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been

⁶⁵ Κόσμος (Matt.) is οἰκουμένη (Luke); Luke adds ἐν στιγμῇ χρόνου (verse 7); τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην (verse 8); ἔμοι παραδίδονται (verse 8); ἢ ἐὰν θέλω, δίδωμι αὐτήν (verse 9).

⁶⁶ E.g., Gerhardsson, "The Parable of the Sower and its Interpretation", *op. cit.*, p. 171: "Matthew is the evangelist who has preserved the narrative in perfect condition . . . Luke also has it, though in a form which suggests that he himself had not understood the secret behind the three temptations".

⁶⁷ However, cf. the 'Ascension' motif in Luke (2: 22; 8: 22; 9: 51; Acts 1: 21-2). Its importance as the key to the 'travel narrative' has been seen by C. F. Evans, "The Central Section of St. Luke's Gospel" (*Studies in the Gospels* ed. by D. E. Nineham, 1957), although some of the parallels that he draws with the Biblical and extra-Biblical material may be too fanciful.

given to me", would suggest that the temptation of Satan is meant to convey the idea that the authority over (Luke) and ownership of (Matthew) everything can be his ἐν στιγμήν χρόνου without having to go up to Jerusalem (Luke 9: 51), which means without having to face the cross.⁶⁸

In the second place we notice a slight difference in what is being offered to Jesus: in Matthew it is "all the kingdoms of the world (τοῦ κόσμου) and their glory". In Luke it is "all the kingdoms of the *oikumene*": "I will give you all this authority and their glory"—which suggests that in Matthew the temptation is to rule, to exchange the kingdom of heaven for the kingdoms of this present age (cf. John 12: 31; 14: 30; 16: 11) by admitting Satan as an ally, while in Luke the temptation is to personal power and ambition within the kingdom. The difference may be somewhat subtle but it brings out, even in the false idea of Satan, the close link between Jesus and the kingdom. In this temptation Satan does not try to separate Jesus from the kingdom but rather to pervert the idea of kingdom and Jesus' means of achieving it.

The reply of Christ is directed towards the false means that Satan wishes him to adopt in the bringing in of the kingdom. Christ is the Son of God; God alone deserves worship and service. To Christ already belongs all power and authority; compare Matt. 11: 27 (Luke 10: 22), "All things have been delivered (παρεδόθη) to me by my Father", with Luke 4: 6, "it has been delivered (παραδέδοται) to me". They are His only through suffering and death, and His authority is of a vastly different order to that offered to Him by the tempter.

Of the three temptations this one, perhaps, most obviously takes up the theme of the cross already hinted at in the baptism at the hands of John.⁶⁹ The reality of the choice in the historical context of the beginning of Christ's ministry is plain when we record some

⁶⁸ Cf. W. C. Allen, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (1925), pp. 32-3; E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (1966), p. 94. Père Didon, quoted in Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (1907), p. 112, says that Christ "avait sous les yeux ce chemin de Jéricho à Jérusalem qu'il devait suivre un jour, avec ses disciples, pour aller à la mort" (*Jésus Christ*, p. 209). A further parallel between the two narratives would be, ἐν πεσῶν προσκύνησιν μοι (Matt. 4: 9) and ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν (Matt. 28: 17) which, in the light of the quotation in Matt. 4: 10, must be interpreted in terms of the divine Lordship of Christ.

⁶⁹ Cf. Matt. 3: 15 (with Matt. 5: 17-18); Luke 12: 50; Mark 10: 38-39, W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (1948), pp. 31-2.

of the more extravagant of the zealotist claims.⁷⁰ Satan was offering a new interpretation of the theocratic ideal in which ruling over the kingdoms of this world could only mean a bloody conflict and final destruction of the occupying forces of Rome.

We are now in a position to sum up the main points of the temptation narrative before returning finally to its evangelic context and drawing conclusions from this. We would adduce the following results of our investigation:

1. The context and background of the Temptation narrative are strongly impregnated by messianic allusions. Both topologically and theologically it would have had undoubted messianic connotations; so also would the temple as a scene of intense zealot activity.⁷¹ It cannot be doubted therefore that the provenance of the desert was intended to locate the temptation as a challenge to assume a certain messianic rôle.
2. The use of the idea of temptation in the passage bears out its classical sense of the proving of the Son of God to see whether he will go back on his position of filial trust and obedience (cf. Job 1: 11, 20-22; 2: 3-6, 9-10). In this particular case the temptation is directed against the unique Son of God to make him pervert the central rôle that He will play in the kingdom, thus falling prey to the temptation to murmur against God and finally to curse him.
3. The perversion of Jesus' messianic role within the kingdom of God⁷² can only be seen with the context of a particular historical situation. In this respect two types of methodological approach find their complementation. The strictly literary interpretation finds the meaning of the temptations in the deuteronomic understanding of the wilderness wanderings. The tendency of this approach is to regard the accounts of Matthew and Luke as midrashic reflections which find their *Sitz im Leben* in differing situations in the early church. This, as we have seen, does not do justice to the complexity of the account and, in any case, is based on faulty methodology. The most that the literary-critical/form-critical method can assert is that the relationship of Israel to God in the wilderness is paralleled by that of God's Son. The contemporary-historical approach seeks to fill in the specific background of the temptation,

⁷⁰ Cf. Josephus, *B.J.* vi. 312-16; *Asc. Moses*, x. 8. On the prophecy that one from Israel "should rule the world" cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 13; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.

⁷¹ This does not imply, of course, that later on Jesus executed a military operation on the temple in the expulsion of the merchants, seen by the authorities as a messianic threat, cf. E. Trocmé, "L'Expulsion des Marchands du Temple", *N.T.S.*, 15 (1968-9), pp. 17ff.

for temptation to be temptation must have a context and a goal.

We can answer the question: "To what end the temptations?" in the following way. First, the temptations were designed to cause the Son of God to doubt the divine interpretation of His mission presented to Him in His baptism by offering Him an alternative road to tread. As a result of this, secondly, they were designed to cause the Son to fail in His specific attitude of trust and obedience to the Father, as Israel of old had failed. The temptations are set in the context of the working out of filial obedience in a specific historical situation.⁷²

4. The historical context was twofold. The first temptation shows a marked invitation towards accepting the quietistic role of the Sadducean collaborationists. The other two are set within the context of the zealot anticipation of the kingdom of God. On the one hand Jesus rejects that interpretation of life which had come to mean for a small section of highly privileged persons a defence of their material gains.⁷³ Various episodes in the life and teaching of Jesus reflect His unhesitating repudiation of such a narrow, selfish and ungodly outlook on life⁷⁴ which brought Him into inevitable conflict with these priestly aristocrats. On the other hand Jesus equally rejects the violent and precipitate methods of the Zealots. Their methods, born of their attitude, also reflect a complete lack of confidence in the God who acts. They seek to force the hand of God, thereby putting themselves outside of the sovereignty of God. The end of such commitment is inevitably to arrogate to oneself an authority and lust for power which are the antithesis of true humble obedience to the Lord of all. The rejection by Jesus of the Zealots' aims and methods is due to the fact that he realized that God's ends could not be achieved by changing God's means.⁷⁵

⁷² Anything less than this historical situation cannot be imagined without removing from Christ the force of the temptation which comes in the concreteness of the historical choice. A purely midrashic interpretation turns either Christ (or, by extension, the Church) into a docetic figure and makes him quite irrelevant in the formation of our attitudes to equally specific historical choices.

⁷³ Cf. D. S. Russell, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod* (1967), pp. 158-9.

⁷⁴ E.g., Matt. 6: 19-21; 25-34; Luke 12: 13-21.

⁷⁵ Further on the rejection of the Zealot activity, cf., O. Cullmann, *The State*, pp. 47-8; E. Trocmé, *Jésus*, pp. 157ff.; H. Montefiore, *op. cit.* It is outside of the scope of this essay to reflect on the historical fact that neither the Sadducees nor the Zealots remained as an abiding force in Israel. After A.D. 135 the Pharisees (whose particular political position did not seem to represent a temptation to Jesus) were left as the authentic interpreters of Judaism.

CONCLUSIONS

We would divide our conclusions into two parts. On the one hand stand the messianic rôles which Jesus rejected, and on the other the rôle which he accepted.

The Rejection. We have already seen that Jesus was forced by the peculiar historical background of the temptation into a choice between two extreme attitudes: Sadduceism or Zealotism.⁷⁶ Transposed into terminology commonly used today the choice was between quietism (the acceptance and defence of the *status quo* and the refusal to be moved by the very real problems of injustice and inhumanity) and violent revolution (the acceptance of the resort to violence to achieve specific political and social ends whatever may be the results unleashed by such action). As so often in the course of history the choice, although a very real one, is a completely false one.⁷⁷

We can conclude from Jesus' rejection of this false polarization that the particular force of the temptations lay, not only in the paths to power which were marked out—the lust for power in one form or other being a strong component of sinful humanity⁷⁸—but also in being faced with two alternatives as if they were the only two alternatives open in the particular situation. Jesus rejected not only the context of the temptations but the way in which they were framed.

The True Ministry. From the Synoptic accounts of the Baptism narrative (particularly that of Matthew) we can see a peculiarly strong sense of the mission of Jesus worked out in terms of fulfilment (Matt. 3: 15)⁷⁹ of the messianic role of the suffering servant.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Trocmé, *Jésus*, p. 157, says the choice was between Zealotism and Essenism. This, however, if it was a choice, was of a different order—the choice between forcing the hand of God, and waiting for the divinely initiated intervention. However the evidence we have adduced suggests that Jesus rejected every type of armed combat in defence of the kingdom.

⁷⁷ And for that reason a temptation; cf. O. Cullmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 40.

⁷⁸ Cf. A. Adler, "Individual Psychology" (*The World of Psychology, II: Identity and Motivation*, ed. G. B. Levitas, 1963) pp. 199-206.

⁷⁹ Cf. C. F. D. Moule, "Fulfilment Words in the New Testament", *N.T.S.*, 14 (1967-8), pp. 313-17.

⁸⁰ Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 27 identifies, in the consciousness of Jesus, a deliberate link between the Son of Man sayings and suffering and a deliberate silence with regard to Messianism just because of the false interpretation offered to it in the contemporary setting. Further, cf. R. T. France, "The Servant of the Lord in the Teaching of Jesus", *Tyndale Bulletin*, 19 (1968), pp. 26-52.

That the driving out of Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan has specifically to do with this messianic role can be seen in the introductory phrase which Satan twice uses to address Jesus. "If you are the Son of God". However, as we have already hinted, the true interpretation of His ministry which Jesus adopts in practice can only be seen by what follows the temptation narrative.

Just as in the case of the desert both topography and theology play a large part in the understanding of its importance so also we must understand the movement of Jesus, after the temptation, into Galilee in the same light (Matt. 4: 12; Matt. 1: 14; Luke 4: 14).

(a) *Topography.* Matthew and Mark mention that it was after John had been imprisoned that Jesus came into Galilee. The ministry of John was effectively at an end. By his preaching in the region of the Jordan he had prepared in the wilderness a people for the Lord (Matt. 3: 3; Luke 1: 16-17; 3: 4-6). His movement had caused a great stir and its repercussions lasted for a considerable time after his death (Luke 3: 10-14, 15; Mark 6: 14-16; John 3: 25-26; 5: 35; Acts 19: 1ff).⁸¹ Now it had to cease for its leader had been removed; and although he still exercised a considerable authority from prison (Matt. 11: 2ff.; Mark 6: 29), we can imagine that many of his disciples must have been somewhat bewildered, wondering perhaps whether *ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου* would continue the movement in the desert, or in what way it could be considered that the Messiah had now truly come.⁸²

Jesus could probably have capitalized on this sense of frustration and reinitiated the work of John in the desert. However it appears that he deliberately turned his back on the desert with all its false associations and went into Galilee.

This decision must be seen, on the one hand, as a negative rejection of the desert as a sphere of legitimate ministry, and on the other as a particular interpretation of his messianic role in the light of John's preaching.

(b) *Theology.* Connected with the topographical importance of leaving the desert and going into Galilee is the twofold theological aspect: the interpretation which Jesus gives to the messianic task assigned to Him by the Baptist (Matt. 3: 11ff. and par.); and the particular theological importance of Galilee.

⁸¹ Cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (1967), pp. 145-6.

⁸² U. W. Mauser, op. cit., following H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1954), p. 18, maintains that, "the wilderness . . . becomes a topographical symbol for the old epoch which is superseded by Jesus".

It might seem from the Baptist's question (Matt. 11: 3; Luke 7: 19) that Jesus had departed from what John thought should have been the messianic activity.⁸³ The baptism in spirit and fire, of which the verse, "his winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire", seems to be an extended illustration, in the thought of John involved some kind of catastrophic violent judgment. However there is no evidence that Jesus regarded John's ministry or preaching as mistaken, but rather the reverse (Matt. 11: 11; 17: 12-13). There is evidence, on the other hand, that John's own mission was misunderstood, either wilfully or innocently (Matt. 11: 12; Luke 7: 24). From this we may suppose that Jesus chose to go into Galilee in order to disassociate himself completely from all desert theology—"what did you go out into the wilderness to behold?"; "if they say to you, 'Lo he is in the wilderness', do not go out."

It is Matthew above all who underlines the theological significance of Galilee. There may be many reasons why Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee⁸⁴ but the direct linking of this district with his ministry through the fulfilling of the prophetic word is paramount (Matt. 4: 12-17).

Galilee, although also the centre of much "revolutionary activity",⁸⁵ harboured a people more open to the new teaching (Mark 1: 27) which Jesus would bring them; this was "Galilee of the nations". They were to be the ones first privileged to know and understand that in the message and person of Jesus "light has dawned". In Galilee, without its dangerously specific messianic connotation, he could openly preach that "the kingdom of God is at hand".

From the beginning, then, Jesus interpreted His ministry not in the narrow sense of a nationalistic redeemer figure founded upon an outmoded theocratic ideal, but in terms of the nations, to bring to them salvation.⁸⁶ We may then argue the following historical process:

(i) The Bath Qol at the baptism interprets the messianic ministry of Jesus in terms of the servant of Isa. 42 and allied passages.

⁸³ Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection" (*Twelve N.T. Studies*, 1962), pp. 37-9.

⁸⁴ Cf. L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Galilean Christianity* (1956), pp. 23-5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26; Brandon, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁸⁶ Cf. Luke 1: 79; 2: 30-2; 3: 6; Jeremias, *Jesu Verheissung für die Völker*, 1956 (E.T. *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, 1958), *in loc.*

(ii) Meditation on the passage in Isa. 42 would lead to the conclusion that the messianic calling was to suffering (Isa. 42: 4)⁸⁷ and to a universal mission (Isa. 42: 1, 4).

(iii) The mention of "coastlands" (Isa. 42: 4) might suggest also the passage of Isa. 9, "in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, *the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations,*" thus linking the locality of Galilee with the ministry of the Servant.

(iv) Even if this be unlikely, the preaching of Jesus, referred to in Mark 1: 15 as "preaching the gospel of God", must have as its background those passages in Isaiah which refer to the preaching of the good news (e.g. 49: 9; 52: 7) in conjunction with the eternal reign of Yahweh (52: 7; 9: 7). So that when Jesus opens His preaching ministry speaking of the gospel and of the kingdom He is indirectly interpreting His own ministry in terms of the Servant.

(v) This interpretation is finally confirmed by the fulfilment in the person of Jesus of the messianic text of Isa. 61: 1-2 (compare Isa. 42: 6-7; 49: 8-9).⁸⁸

The acceptance of His messianic ministry in terms of the Servant, in obedience to the significance of His baptism, and in rejection of the Satanic temptations to tread another path, can only mean one thing—Jesus deliberately chose the cross as God's unique way in which the kingdom would be brought in. The *political* alternative to violent revolution and to bourgeois privilege and inactivity is the cross. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!"

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⁸⁷ "Bruised" would be a legitimate translation of *yarús* (cf. Isa. 53: 5 *mēdukka*).

⁸⁸ It is not possible to enter the detailed and complicated theories that have been advanced over this passage, e.g., Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, pp. 44ff.; Trocmé, *Jésus*, pp. 22ff.; Anderson, "The Rejection of Nazareth Pericope of Luke 4: 16-30 in the Light of Recent Critical Trends", *Interpretation*, xviii, 3 (July 1964), pp. 259-75. The purpose of including it is to demonstrate that the move from the desert region to Galilee has as its principal object the confirmation of the Servant ideal in the ministry of Jesus, a confirmation necessary after the recent temptation to commit Himself to another ideal. The contrast between Himself and the messianic pretenders has to be drawn very sharply if the people are going to understand His true rôle.