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E. SCHWEIZER

DISCIPLESHIP AND BELIEF IN JESUS AS LORD FROM JESUS TO THE HELLENISTIC CHURCH¹

(Translated by H. F. PEACOCK)

The Church to which we are permitted to proclaim the Gospel is no longer the Palestinian Church of the time of Jesus, for whom the real goal of life was to pass safely through the judgement of God. Neither is the Church any longer that of the time of Luther, weighed down by its consciousness of sin and the medieval fear of judgement. Today the message of forgiveness of sins answers a question which, to a large extent, has disappeared from the consciousness of modern man. The modern world is, however, similar in many ways to the Hellenistic world into which the Christian message entered with the proclamation of Paul. The unity of heaven and earth, as it had been perceived in the classic period, is destroyed for the Hellenistic man. The world for him is controlled by powers and forces to which he has been handed over helpless.² *Ananke* or *Heimarmene* (Fate or Destiny) determines everything and the action of the individual is incapable of altering their established course.³ The ever-repeated movement of the heavenly bodies, once conceived as the expression of divine harmony, awakens now the concept of a giant machine which mercilessly completes its revolution, deaf to the cries of men. Of course, the Stoic seeks to flee back into the old harmony between God and the world and for that reason declares the whole world to be his *polis*. But even he knows that everything in this *polis* is determined by the great powers, their mighty armies, and their modern weapons and no longer by his individual decision. Thus the desires and longings of the Hellenistic man are concentrated upon liberation from the demonic powers of this world and upon participation in the upper, godly world.⁴

¹ Here only a short sketch can be given of this theme. For all detailed argument I must refer to my book, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern* (Zwingli-verlag, Zürich, 1955).

² K. Prümm, *Religionsgeschichtliches Handbuch für den Raum der altchristlichen Umwelt* (1943), p. 440; H. Braun, *Plutarchs Kritik am Aberglauben* (Der Anfang, 9, 1948); H. Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, I (1934), pp. 141 ff.

³ R. Bultmann, *Das Urchristentum* (1949), pp. 164 f.; F. C. Grant, ed., *Hellenistic Religions* (1953), p. xviii; M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, II (1950), pp. 190 ff., 259, 264 ff., 286 ff. 484 f.; Prümm, *Religionsgeschichtliches Handbuch* . . . , pp. 436 ff.; *Stoicorum vet. fragmenta*, ed. J. v. Arnim (1921-4), Zeno fr. 1, 102, Chrysippus II, 1076; cf. the references IV, 15, 46 f., Ps. Aristoteles, *de mundo* 7; Menander fr. 275, 482; Philemon fr. 137.

⁴ Prümm, *Religionsgeschichtliches Handbuch* . . . , p. 437; also E. F. Scott, *The Varieties of New Testament Religion* (1946), pp. 71 ff.

The purpose of this lecture is to show how the message about that which happened in Jesus of Nazareth was developed step by step until it became the answer to the questions of the Hellenistic world.

I

There is no question that Jesus called disciples to follow him. From the very beginning, however, this was something completely different from what a Jewish rabbi did when he called disciples.¹ There was never any thought that the disciple would himself one day become master and then gather disciples around him. Never is the disciple with his reflections and his sacrifice made of prime importance. Jesus, with his call to discipleship, always stands in the centre of our texts. Indeed, in the story of Levi the publican it becomes evident that in the very fact of this call everything decisive has happened, for at that point the grace of God has become event. In the call of Jesus, God himself breaks through the barriers to the sinner. This process is absolutely irreversible. In this call Jesus is 'present' for Levi in a way that the latter can never be for Jesus. And that this did not happen accidentally only once, but was generally understood as the essential characteristic of the activity of Jesus, is proved by the frequently transmitted criticism against the 'glutton and drunkard, the friend of tax-collectors and sinners'.² Precisely because in such a call and in such table-fellowship the grace of God 'happened', this did exclude so radically all other ties. 'We have left all', is the declaration of Peter.³

The concept that the righteous individual must pass through the suffering, humiliation, and shame imposed by God in order, finally, to be exalted by him, is widespread in the Judaism of the time.⁴ The pathway which Jesus follows and along which he takes his disciples with him is thus, first of all, simply the path which Israel, Israel's prophets and righteous individuals, had ever again to follow. It corresponds to a large extent to the picture given in the Wisdom of Solomon, chapters ii-v, of the suffering and exaltation of the righteous, the son and servant of God, who is condemned by men to a shameful death. But Jesus now in reality goes along this pathway as the 'eschatological' Righteous One, as he with whom the kingdom of God comes, indeed, in whom it has already appeared. He is conscious of a mission which surpasses that of the Baptist, who had introduced already the new period of salvation, and even more that of a Solomon or a Jonah.⁵ I consider it quite probable that Jesus called himself the Son of Man and

¹ K. H. Rengstorf, *Theol. Wörterbuch*, ed. Kittel, iv, pp. 447 ff.

² Matt. xi. 19; cf. Mark ii. 14 ff; Matt. xxi. 31 f.; Luke iii. 12; vii. 29; xv. 1; xviii. 10 ff.; xix. 1 ff. and Deut. xxi. 20.

³ Mark x. 28; cf. i. 18, 20; ii. 14; x. 21; Luke ix. 57 ff.; also Mark viii. 34 ff.

⁴ For examples see Schweizer, *Ermiedrigung und Erhöhung* . . . , sect. 5.

⁵ Cf. especially E. Käsemann, *Zeitschr. für Theol. u. Kirche* (1954), pp. 144 ff.

that he expected his exaltation as the coming judge.¹ Even if this were not the case, we must admit without question that his disciples saw in him the one who with absolute and divine authority determined their life, the one who had himself, in ultimate obedience, followed the path imposed by God into distress and suffering and who had thereby brought the promised kingdom of God. He had taken them with him along this pathway and they were prepared for renunciation for the sake of this dawning kingdom.

II

With Easter these thoughts are carried forward to a new stage. Discipleship can no longer be accomplished by a literal walking with Jesus. The Church is well aware of this transition. She was never able to overcome completely her reluctance to employ ἀκολουθεῖν also for this new stage of development. The Church held fast, however, to the basic similarity, in that she transmitted the words of discipleship and, indeed, not as historical reminiscences but as words which were valid for the post-Easter Church.² In doing this, however, the Church was forced to think through the theological question as to the sense in which the words were still valid.

It would have been possible to see in the pathway of Jesus the *example* which the Church had to imitate. That would not have been completely false. But this answer appears rightly only on the outer edges of the New Testament.³ With such an answer, the uniqueness of the way of Jesus would have been lost. And there was never any concern for imitation of his celibacy or of his miracles. Thus it was necessary to choose the other answer: the relationship of the disciple to the preceding Master continued to exist after Easter. There are then two motifs which from the beginning were essential and which must therefore now be theologically explained and emphasized: on the one hand, the pathway of Jesus is absolutely unique, the path in which God's grace overtakes the disciples who have been called to follow it; on the other hand, it is the path along which Jesus takes his disciples with him and which they share with him.

III

Long before Paul, the answer is given that Jesus died 'for sins' (I Cor. xv. 3; also xi. 24). The thought of a substitutionary or atoning suffering is completely foreign to the Greek. Thus it must certainly have originated in the early

¹ For the argument see Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung* . . . , sect. 10e, especially n. 388; so also the recent book of R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*.

² G. Bornkamm (*Wort und Dienst*, Jahrbuch der theol. Schule Bethel, 1948, 49-54) has shown how Matthew transformed the miracle-story of the storm on the lake into a treatise about the discipleship in the church of Christ.

³ Rom. xv. 1-3; I Cor. xi. 1; II Cor. viii. 9; Col. iii. 13; Eph. v. 5, 25; cf. W. F. Lofthouse, *Exp.-Times*, Lxv (1954), pp. 338f.; G. Wingren, *Theol. Lit.zeitung* (1950), pp. 385ff.

Church of Palestine.¹ Indeed, this statement *had* to be made since in Judaism every suffering of the righteous was understood as atoning.² But exactly for that reason the uniqueness of the Christ-event could not be easily emphasized. Although the total tradition knows clearly that the pathway of Jesus is a pathway 'for' his disciples, one that precedes in an absolute sense all of their actions; yet it is equally clear that this was not bound to the special expression of atoning suffering. This expression is, to be sure, found very early, but only with the greatest of hesitation is it placed in the centre of interest. In Mark we find two, in John one or two passages about it. The situation in regard to the appearance of the title 'servant of God' and the songs of the servant of Deutero-Isaiah seems to me to lead to the same conclusion.³ Without doubt, Jesus is very early viewed as the servant of God; but nowhere in our sources is this title directly connected with his atoning suffering. Never do the actual quotations of Isaiah liii point to his atoning suffering; indeed, in only one case is there a reference to his suffering at all. And even as late as Matt. viii. 17 the sentence, 'he took our infirmities and bore our diseases', is seen as fulfilled in the healing activity of Jesus! On the other hand, allusions to Isaiah liii are to be found very early in expressions concerning the atoning suffering of Jesus (Rom. iv. 25; Mark x. 45; xiv. 24). These facts, it seems to me, can be explained only if one recognizes that the early Church termed Jesus 'the servant of God' in a much wider sense, namely, as the one who in obedience submits himself to the imposed suffering and thus moves toward exaltation by God. If they had wished to emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus with this designation, then another thought lay much closer. *The servant of God* in an absolute sense was the new David,⁴ expected already by the prophets, who as God's shepherd would care for his people. Thus we find Jesus and David together as the two servants of God in Acts iv. 25 ff. and Did. 9f.⁵ Thus Jesus appears as the shepherd of his people.

The thought, however, that the pathway of Jesus was a path 'for us' must be held fast. Everything else that could be said about him would be false unless this were *also* said. It is primarily Paul who took up this expression. The cross was for him, in the time before his call, such an offence that he was not able to escape it; he was forced at this point to give a perfectly clear

¹ That Jesus himself formulated this thought appears to me, however, quite unlikely; Mark x. 45 stands completely isolated and has in Luke xxii. 27 what must be an older parallel without the thought of atonement; that the covenant idea in the Lord's Supper is probably earlier than the 'for many' in Mark xiv. 24, I have tried to show in my survey, 'Das Herrenmahl im N.T.', *Theol. Lit.zeitung* (1954), pp. 580 ff.

² Also for the sins of others: II Macc. vii. 37f.; IV Macc. i. 11; vi. 28f.; xvii. 20ff.; (H. Strack-) P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum N.T. aus Talmud und Midrasch*, II (1924), pp. 279ff.; G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, I (1927), pp. 546ff.; further, Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung* . . . , sect. 5e.

³ For all examples see *ibid.*, sect. 9.

⁴ Ezek. xxxiv. 23f.; xxxvii. 24f.; cf. Ps. lxxxix. 4, 21; Jer. xxxiii. 21f., 26; Zech. iii. 8; Hag. ii. 23.

⁵ Assuming that late communion texts have not here been interpolated as E. Peterson, *Rivista di Archeologia Christiana*, xxvii (1951), pp. 56ff. conjectures.

answer. Thus he had nothing else to proclaim except Jesus Christ, and this one crucified (I Cor. ii. 2). For Paul and his church the uniqueness of Jesus had long stood fast on the basis of his resurrection and exaltation. A misunderstanding here, as if Jesus were only another of the Jewish righteous ones, is completely excluded. Thus it is possible for him sometimes, as is the case already in the pre-Pauline material of I Cor. xv. 3-5, that everything is concentrated upon the one point of the crucifixion, the significance of which is then sealed by God by means of the following resurrection. In this way the motif of the 'for us' is brought out very clearly. In a strict sense, however, this means that the other motif, that the disciple is taken with Jesus along the pathway of the Master, is lost. The meaning of such a word as in I Cor. xv. 3-5 lies exactly in the assumption that Jesus has on our behalf followed his pathway into death and that we must no longer walk in this way. If this 'for us' were absent, then everything else would be false; but if this alone were stated, we would have only a half-gospel. How was the second motif, that Jesus takes his disciples with him along the pathway and that their life was in some sense already the new, eschatological one, held fast?¹

IV

In the moment when the post-Easter Church transmitted the words of Jesus about discipleship, she thereby held fast to the fact that such a call to discipleship and such a life with Jesus exists even after Easter. The word in Rev. xiv. 4 about those, 'Who follow the lamb wherever he goes'² is only the explicit formulation of this idea. Actually, however, the same thing takes place in John i. 35 ff. It is true, the evangelist clothes his message about the ἀκολουθεῖν of the disciples—the word appears four times—still in an historical setting of the days of the earthly Jesus. But actually he is concerned with the presentation of discipleship as it was experienced in the post-Easter Church. That is already evident in the fact that ἀκολουθεῖν and πιστεύειν are for him interchangeable concepts (viii. 12; xii. 46). It is evident also in the fact that in comparison with Mark i. 16 ff. the emphasis is placed elsewhere. It is no longer the call of Jesus himself which stands at the beginning, but the testimony of the Baptist. It is not necessary that the call proceed from the earthly Jesus; it can just as well come from a witness to Jesus. In fact, it is not until this point that it is completed, for here for the first time is Jesus clearly visible in all of his meaning for the world: 'Behold, the lamb of God.' Here also for the first time does the cutting of all other connexions become

¹ For the basic meaning of 'way', 'path', cf. G. Wingren, *Studia Theologica*, III (1950/51), pp. 111 ff. (and A. Kuschke, *ibid.* v, pp. 106 ff.).

² In spite of vii. 17 and the present tense, the reference must be to the earthly life of the believer and not to the heavenly. That is evident from the allusions to the Synoptic words of discipleship (Holtzmann, Bousset, Lohmeyer point to Matt. x. 38; xvi. 24f.; but we should also name Matt. viii. 19).

radical. It is not boats and custom-tables and families which the disciples have to abandon, but the Baptist himself, as well as all other individuals who possess only a temporary or limited authority. The decision to follow Jesus includes the rejection of all other bearers of salvation who could be rivals of Jesus. For that reason here also, even the first disciples confess clearly that Jesus is Messiah. For that reason also their service is no longer described in a general way as 'fishing for men', but as testimony to the messiahship of Jesus. But John also still knows well the realistic meaning of discipleship. It is a pathway of opposition and suffering along which the disciple has to walk behind his Lord. That is evident in the peculiar scene in which the exalted Lord gives the command to Peter, 'Follow me'; apparently Peter rises and literally walks after Jesus (xxi. 19f.). That is shown also in all the passages in which Jesus commands his disciples to accomplish that same obedience which he has offered to the Father.

Basically, this answer could have been given shortly after the Easter event. It should be evident that in the earliest stage of development it is not so much the resurrection of Jesus from death as his exaltation which is emphasized. For the very earliest church, indeed, it is only with this event that the actual messiahship of Jesus began. On Easter-day, Jesus was installed as Lord and Christ, even as Son of God.¹ For that reason also Psalm cx is the most frequently quoted passage of the Old Testament and is to be found in all elements of the tradition. For that reason the very early christological summaries of the sermons of Peter² mention only the exaltation of Jesus as the actual centre of the proclamation. His death is only the divinely ordained point of entrance to the exaltation. When later this had to be balanced with the viewpoint that already the earthly Jesus was the second David promised by God, then there develops a sort of two-stage christology. A testimony to this is to be found in the formula which must have originated in Jewish Christianity and which has been taken over by Paul, 'born of the seed of David according to the flesh, designated Son of God (in power) according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead' (Rom. i. 3f.).³

Now, of course, Bousset maintained that belief in the 'Lord' first originated under the influence of the Kyrios-faith of the Hellenistic Mysteries.⁴ Is it, however, possible to conceive that the early Church ever thought of an in-

¹ Acts ii. 36; xiii. 33 (in opposition to F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1951), p. 269, and others); the basis of Rom. i. 4; probably also of Heb. i. 5.

² It is certain that the whole Petrine speeches do not go back to the early church. A. W. Argyle (*J. Theol. Stud.* (1953), pp. 213f.) has shown that ii. 14ff. was composed in Greek. But nevertheless, in my opinion, this is true for the christological summaries. To my arguments, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung* . . . , sect. 6a, footnote 180, it should be added that x. 42 does not contain the thought of i. 8, so important for Luke, that already the risen Lord gave commandment about the mission to the heathen.

³ D. Daube (*J. Theol. Stud.* 1951, p. 48) conjectures that also Mark xii. 35ff. distinguishes between the earthly son of David and the exalted Lord of David.

⁴ W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (1913); *Jesus, der Herr* (1916).

active Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God and only waiting until he could appear as judge? Since Bauernfeind has shown that Acts iii. 20f. is an expectation about Elijah which has been transferred to Jesus,¹ even the single sentence which could indicate such a viewpoint has disappeared. The formula 'Maranatha' and the frequent designation of believers as 'those calling upon the name of the Lord' proves that the Kyrios-faith goes back to the Aramaic-speaking Church. That an original 'our Lord' becomes in Greek the absolute 'the Lord' under the influence of Hellenistic usage, is easily explainable. In exactly the same way, Paul writes almost sixty times 'brothers' and only about five times 'my brothers', in spite of the fact that the Jew knows only the address 'my brothers' or 'our brothers'.² That is true for all of the Pauline letters, where this address appears frequently, with the exception of Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastorals, where it is completely absent. The Jewish word 'rabbi' is also translated by 'teacher' and not by 'my teacher'. When, further, the words about discipleship continue to be transmitted in the early Church; when the absolute use of *μαθητής* seems to go back to the early Church;³ when the pronouncement of the name of Jesus over the individual being baptized can hardly be interpreted otherwise than that this one is brought under the Lordship of the Exalted; then we cannot doubt that faith in the Lord, who even after Easter controlled and led the Church, is already present in the early Palestinian Church both in fact and in word.

I do not need to say much about how this faith continued to live in Paul. According to Rom. xiv. 7-9 the goal of the death and resurrection of Jesus is precisely that he should be Lord; and according to Rom. viii. 34 Paul can see in the intercession of the Exalted One who sits at the right of God the goal of the total event of salvation.⁴ But it is necessary to remind ourselves that the so-called Christ-mysticism of Paul is, to a large extent, the old sharing by the disciple of the pathway of the Master. Certainly the ideas of the Mysteries have had their influence on the development of concepts. But Paul, in contradiction to the Mysteries, does *not* in the earlier letters speak of being raised with Christ. The resurrection with him takes place first in the life of faith or in the resurrection from the dead.⁵ And above all, participation in the Cross of Jesus takes place in the suffering of persecution—a thought completely foreign to all the Mysteries.⁶ John, when he means the same thing, uses the old word *ἀκολουθεῖν*. I think not only of the previously

¹ O. Bauernfeind (*Theol. Handkommentar zum N.T.* 1939), *ad loc.* I agree with J. A. T. Robinson that this *could* have happened in some early Christian group. Thus it could be the expression of a (but not *the*) very early christology.

² (Strack-)Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum N.T.* . . . , II, pp. 765f.

³ Rengstorf, *Theol. Wörterbuch*, IV, p. 462.

⁴ Cf. also Acts viii. 33 *b/c* where possibly the church, which came into existence by means of mission activity, is founded upon the basis of his exaltation.

⁵ Rom. vi. 4ff.; Phil. iii. 11; but cf. even Col. ii. 12 *διὰ τῆς πίστεως*.

⁶ II Cor. iv. 10; I Cor. xv. 31; Rom. viii. 36; probably also Gal. vi. 17; Col. i. 24; I Pet. v. 1.

cited passage, xxi. 19–22, but also of xiii. 36ff. where Peter desires to follow Jesus into death and must hear that he will do that only later and in a different way; I think also of xii. 24–6 where the destiny of Jesus and the disciples is so interwoven that one cannot decide whether the middle verse refers to Jesus or to the disciples. We will return to both of these passages in a moment.

v

When now this sharing of the pathway of Jesus through humiliation to exaltation is emphasized, how is it possible to hold fast to the fact that Jesus's way is 'for us'? The superior position of Jesus is naturally always clear when he is described as Lord and the disciples as obedient to him. But it is necessary to go beyond that to emphasize that he is prior to the disciples: that our salvation is dependent upon the fact that he, in an ultimate sense, has gone this way before all of us. Otherwise, that which the first disciples and the opponents of Jesus saw so clearly would be lost.

The most systematic presentation is that of Paul, who unites both of these motifs. By an analysis of his πνεῦμα-concept it is possible to show that for him the exalted Christ is none other than the crucified Jesus; but, to be sure, the Crucified as he who continues to distribute to his Church the blessing of that which happened at the Cross. Since such an analysis cannot be made here, I must refer you to the *Theologisches Wörterbuch* where I will expound my views. The same answer is also naturally given, although somewhat less systematically, in all of the passages where the expression of the atoning suffering of the earthly Jesus and the Lordship of the exalted Jesus stand side by side; that is, in almost all of the books of the New Testament.

But there is still another way in which the character of the pathway of Jesus as that which has happened 'for us' is held fast. We start from the previously cited passage, John xiii. 36ff., where Jesus explains to Peter that he will be able to complete the ἀκολουθεῖν only later. The continuation of the discourse shows clearly that the prerequisite is this, that Jesus must himself first have followed to the end the pathway to the Father and that only then could he bring his disciples into the heavenly dwelling-places. Quite similarly, it is said in the second of the cited passages, xii. 32, that it is only the exalted Lord who can draw his disciples to himself. I am of the opinion that the concept ἀκολουθεῖν still primarily describes the earthly pathway of the disciple in obedient suffering; but this is not to be separated from its continuation. 'Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me' (xvii. 24).

That is no new thought. From the very beginning the disciples considered that they should participate in the glory of the coming kingdom of God.¹

¹ Cf. such passages as Matt. xix. 28; Mark x. 30.

From the very beginning they also knew that the coming of this kingdom could never be the reward for their service. All that was demanded from them was faithfulness, by which they were to remain with Jesus; but never in such a way that the promised reward corresponded to their service.¹ Both of these thoughts are now expressly held fast. In the first point the temporal thought-pattern, in which the new age is thought of as following the old, is replaced by a spatial thought-pattern: the coming world is the heavenly world. Some preparation has already been made for this change of thought by the use of Psalm cx and the words about the exaltation of Jesus. It is prepared for in the two-stage christology which we found in Rom. i. 3f. and which appears also in II Tim. ii. 8; I Pet. iii. 18; and I Tim. iii. 16; and which thus must have been a widespread thought-pattern. The same shift of thought is to be found frequently.² Much more important is the theological development of the second point. The old expectation that the disciple can experience the glory of the coming kingdom only in so far as he has a share in the destiny of Jesus, is now made explicit: the fact that Jesus precedes them in going to the Father is described as an act of salvation 'for' the disciples. Only because he has gone before is it possible for them to follow. It is not only John who presents this message; the author of Hebrews also knows that Jesus is the 'forerunner' on the pathway to heaven.³

But in what way? The answers which are given vary. In the Fourth Gospel the exaltation of Jesus to the Father is identical with his being lifted up on the Cross. It is just in his complete obedience that heaven and earth, God and man, are again united. That is particularly clear in xii. 24-33 where the evangelist at the end adds the comment, 'He said this to show by what death he was to die'. In Hebrews the decisive thought is, as already in Rom. viii. 34, that the One exalted to God is able to be the interceding high priest in the heavenly temple. Still another answer is given when the One who has gone into heaven assumes the Lordship over all powers. This idea also is already implicit in the Easter event. Especially Psalm cx had already spoken of the subjection of all enemies. And naturally there was never a time when the Church did not also believe that her Lord was at the same time also Lord over his enemies. For that very reason she followed the path of suffering, because she was convinced that her Lord was stronger than all opponents who delivered her up to death. That fact was also expressed in the stories which spoke of the victory of Jesus over demons, storm, and death. However, it is evident that the Lordship of Jesus is first of all clearly a Lordship over his Church and only gradually came to be confessed as a Lordship over the cosmos. In this connexion, the first formulations still speak of the subjection

¹ Mark x. 30; cf. A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Markus* (1935), p. 197.

² Also in the rabbinic literature 'the coming world' is often the upper, heavenly, now existing world; cf. the contrast between the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above in Gal. iv. 26; further examples in Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung* . . . , sect. 16e, f.

³ Heb. vi. 20; further ii. 10f.; iv. 14; ix. 11-28.

of all powers of opposition as beginning with the ascension and as being completed only at the Parousia (I Cor. xv. 24 ff.; Phil. ii. 10 f.,¹ in both cases described with Old Testament quotations). But since the complete victory is actually already decided at his ascension, the ascension itself can be understood as the subjection of all powers (Col. ii. 15; I Pet. iii. 22). Hellenistic concepts have probably made this development easier.²

VI

But there is still another way in which the uniqueness of the Christ event is firmly held to, as an event which benefits us. When Jesus called Levi, Levi knew that in this call the living God had met him and that therein salvation took place. Although the people may have held Jesus to be a prophet, for Levi and for all the disciples he was from the beginning on more than that. In him, for all of them, God himself entered into their lives. How could this perception be preserved? It could be done with the titles Servant of God, Son of God, Christ, Son of Man. But one would have to say also that God had sent him, indeed, that he had himself come from God. So long as the preacher lived among Jews he could proclaim that the time had been fulfilled, that Jesus was the 'eschatological' individual sent by God. But how could it be said to the Hellenist, who could not even think in terms of the fulfilment of time? Now in regard to the Son of Man who was one day to come, it had long been proclaimed that he would come from heaven. The messengers of Jesus, however, proclaimed nothing else than that this eschatological Son of Man had already come. In this concept, which lay very close to the thought of the Hellenist, that Jesus came from God, spatially understood: came down from heaven, there was expressed exactly what Levi and the first disciples had experienced; what the Synoptics emphasized with the sentence, 'I have come': and what also, in another way, the story of the virgin birth bore witness to. It is certainly no accident that the proclamation of the descent of Jesus is, in that place where we first meet it in developed form, namely, Phil. ii. 6 ff., closely connected with the old thought of the suffering of the righteous. The coming of Jesus out of the world of God is here nothing else than the first step of obedience into humiliation. In the Fourth Gospel the whole life of Jesus is portrayed as one of obedience, and the proclamation of his pre-existence with God guarantees the statement that in this life of absolute obedience God has in reality joined himself to man, the 'upper' world has been united with the 'lower'. In the Book of Hebrews the fact is emphasized above all else that the Son became like us in all points in order that he might one day exercise the function of the interceding high priest.

¹ Even if the subjunctive be genuine (against R. Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror*, 1954, p. 114).

² Gnosticism later saw the decisive event in the physically conceived breaking through the spheres which separated earth from the heavenly world.

What happened at that time when Jesus came to Levi has been elevated to the generally valid statement: God comes to the world and this is completely *His* resolve, His grace.

VII

We have asked whether the New Testament also has an answer for the modern man of Hellenism or of the twentieth century, who appears to be bothered in no way by his sins. The Fourth Gospel tells us of him who, in absolute obedience to the Father, has reunited heaven and earth. The unity of obedient humiliation and promised exaltation has become so absolute in him that in the Cross event the two have become one. Into such obedience he takes his own along with him and they know that their pathway with him will not end until they come into that glory where he is. The absolute priority of this way of Jesus is unmistakable: only his coming from the father and only his return to him makes it possible that others shall be taken with him. And the disciple, who follows this path, recognizes that the sin which must be forgiven him is nothing else than his refusal to believe, this separation of his from God and God's world, this anxiety of his and his homelessness (John xvi. 9). The Book of Hebrews speaks of the great 'forerunner', who has become like his brethren in all things in order that he might really make intercession for them before the Father. Also here God's people are called to journey with their eye upon the pioneer and perfecter of their faith, whose pathway begins with God and ends in him.

Our answer assumes still sharper outlines when we consider such a brief confession as Phil. ii. 6-11. It seems in many ways to be early Christian material. The divinity of Jesus is proved exactly in his absolute humiliation, in the obedience of the servant of God. The death on the cross is only the last step along this pathway. The exaltation is the direct result of his obedience. Everything is still directed toward the complete subjection of all powers, which is yet to come. And yet, the confession is at the same time completely open to the questions of the Hellenistic world. In Jesus, God's world has entered into this earthly world; and in him, all powers and authorities have been fundamentally conquered. He has a name which is above every name. He has taken the place of the *Heimarmene*, of the *Ananke*. It is surprising that in this confession the Church is not even mentioned. But why should the Church be named? By the very fact that she sings this hymn, she belongs already to those who bow their knee and confess with their tongues that Jesus Christ is Lord. By the very act of singing she confesses herself to be indeed saved by him; she proclaims that everything has been done for her by him and that sin itself consists in refusing to sing praises for what he has done, in sinking back again into anxiety, in worshipping the powers and authorities instead of the one name which is higher than all others.

The last step is taken in the hymn in I Tim. iii. 16. 'He was manifested in

the flesh'—the calamitous separation of the earthly world from the heavenly is taken away. 'He was vindicated in the Spirit'—he was not one of the many who only claimed to be Lord; he was Lord in reality, the true Lord. 'He was seen by angels'—all heavenly powers and authorities, good as well as evil, are subject to him. 'He was preached among the nations'—all earthly powers and authorities must listen to his word. 'He was believed on in the world'—as victor, he returned from his march through the nations. 'He was taken up in glory'—as conqueror, he has taken the place of the *Heimarmene*. How Hellenistic and early Christian at the same time!¹ The thought-pattern which separates the sphere of the flesh and that of the Spirit is already prepared for in that early, Jewish-Christian, two-stage christology of Rom. i. 3f. The decisive event with which everything first begins is the appearance of Jesus in the flesh. 'None of the heavenly gods will forsake heaven and come down to earth', *Corp. Herm.* x, 25 declares, in contrast. And then his victory is sung in detail, his victory which is completed in the missionary activity upon earth as well as in the worship of the heavenly powers. Here also, everything has taken place when the Church places herself under his Lordship in her singing (and from this point outward in her total life). It is not necessary to say more. It is the same 'Yes' which the first disciples brought to expression when they permitted themselves to be taken by Jesus with him along his pathway and knew that now everything, up to the fulfilment in the coming kingdom, was determined by him. He is present 'for them'. The grace of God, the forgiveness of sin, has already happened in the very fact that he was present for them and that they, who were far from him, have been brought again into fellowship with God.

Again, it is no accident that there is not a single book in the New Testament which contains only this answer to the questions of the Hellenistic world and does not at the same time mention expressly the atoning death of Jesus. He who really confesses in the way that this Hellenistic Church has done, knows that Jesus has done everything 'for him'. How could he do otherwise than express it plainly and openly! But it is possible that Jesus means for him, first of all, the answer to completely different questions; that Jesus calls him

¹ Hellenism knows no descent of the gods to earth. There are men who were begotten of the gods claimed for Plato by his nephew Speusippus: Diog. Laert. iii, 2), redeemers sent by Providence (Inscription of Priene). There is, in the dissolving old belief in the gods, an identification of abstract concepts with the old names for gods: 'Hermes is the Logos whom the gods have sent to us having created among all beings on earth only men as logical ones', at about the same time as the N.T. in Cornutus in Africa: Kleinknecht, *Theol. Wörterbuch*, ed. Kittel, iv, 85f.; cf. A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, iii (1953), pp. 158ff. There is, above all, the concept that the souls of men originate in heaven or are demons banished to the earth, and one may ask whether this is not true only for particularly favoured men in Empedocles (fifth century B.C.) (Diels-Kranz, i, p. 207, fr. 115). But the Hellenist knows nothing of a descent of a god-redeemer to earth and nothing of an incarnation. From his presuppositions he is forced to see in such figures only the symbol for the eternal destiny, which ever remains the same, of the soul which has fallen from heaven. That is exactly what the gnosticism of the second century A.D. does. All examples in Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung* . . . , sect. 15.

first into daily obedience, there becomes his 'Lord' and thus makes him free from anxiety and the senselessness of life until he understands that exactly at that point his 'sins' have been taken from him.

Only where one would no longer admit the truth of this fact; where the figure of Jesus must therefore no longer be a concrete, historical figure; where his figure is degraded to a symbol of my own inner being; where this figure is no longer a present reality 'for me', but unites me so closely with itself that I, on the basis of natural similarity, must of necessity climb to heaven, whose closed gates the preceding Redeemer has physically broken; only there is the New Testament message abandoned; there we have landed in gnosticism.