THE MESSIANIC ROLE OF JESUS AND THE TEMPTATION NARRATIVE: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

by J. ANDREW KIRK

PROFESSOR J. A. Kirk is a new contributor. He is not unknown to members of the Tyndale Fellowship; he is a Cambridge graduate who now occupies the Chair of New Testament in the Facultad Evangélica de Teología in Buenos Aires. It may be his South American environment that has moved him to pay critical attention to the current portrayal of our Lord as the patron of revolutionary insurgence. He examines this portrayal with special reference to the temptation narrative, which he considers in its social and political setting.

I

THE following study is set in the context of one of the most important concerns of our moment of history, that of "revolution" and the supposed need of structural change in society.

It is not the purpose of this study to enter the debate about the "theology of revolution", nor to try to interpret the modern phenomena of "revolution" in the light of the New Testament understanding of man in society, neither of which I take to be the tasks of New Testament research *per se*. My task will be much more limited. It will be to try to clarify the attitude of Jesus Christ to the "political" movements of His time, whether revolutionary or not,[1] as this can be deduced from the choice that He was forced to make at the very beginning of His ministry. This will be, in fact, a study of the Temptation narrative as one instance of this choice.

The study is motivated by two important contemporary considerations. In the first place there can be discerned on the part of some writers an increasing inclination to accept that the attitude of Jesus, as discoverable in the gospels, is in favour of the aims of "revolution" in its radical political and violent sense. Or, to put it another way, that true discipleship of Jesus Christ can only be worked out to-day in terms of unreserved commitment to the revolutionary struggle. This position, I believe, needs to be re-

[1] [Cf. editorial comments on Oscar Cullmann's *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York, 1970) in THE EVANGELICAL QUARTERLY, April-June 1971, p. 66. Another publication worthy of commendation is Martin Hengel's inaugural lecture, *War Jesus Revolutionär?* (Stuttgart, 1970). ED.]

studied from a careful historical analysis of Christ's own relationship to and teaching about involvement in his own contemporary political situation in the light of his understanding of his mission.

In the second place, and this could open up a fruitful new approach to the "Jesus of History" debate, it is important and valid to study the gospels in the light of the socio-ethical questions being asked to-day.[2] Although there are great dangers in this line of approach, as we shall go on to show, nevertheless questions rightly asked can often illuminate passages or theological concepts; or, at the least, and this is probably more important, can send us back to our original sources with fresh possibilities of understanding them.

Methodically, of course, we have to be very careful not to reinterpret the sources in the light of presuppositions already held. There is, in the present discussion about "revolution", the danger of wresting from the documents answers to present concerns which are in accord with already well-formulated ideas. This is to say, in effect, that we know what answers we want before we undertake the study. Besides being exegetically unsound such a method removes all possibility of a critical assessment of current beliefs because the documents are not allowed to speak on their own authority nor from their moment of history.

An example of this type of "eisegesis", if we may call it that, can be seen in various attempts to bridge the gulf between the "ethic" of Jesus and the situational ethics in vogue today. It demonstrates, of course, the perennial problem of the true relation between the norm, the absolute, the given in ethical judgment and its application in individual and concrete, although not necessarily less complex, situations.

The problem has two facets. On the one hand if the "ethic" of Jesus is rejected as normative for one of various reasons, e.g. that his "ethic" was interim, for the time between the comings,[3] then what alternative norm can be substituted for it by which we may interpret the "ethic" of Jesus?[4] On the other hand if the

[2] Cf. J. Moltmann, "Toward a Political Hermeneutics of the Gospel", *Union Sem. Quart. Review*, xxiii, 4 (1968), pp. 313ff.

[3] Cf. W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (1964), pp. 428-9; G. E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (1964), pp. 274-300.

[4] N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (1965), pp. 5f., has dealt exegetically with the inadequate inversion of the Johannine saying ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν which is very relevant in this discussion because, in much ethical debate, love is often defined as a norm, even to interpret New Testament ethics. Love abstracted from the full Biblical revelation of God is without much content.

"ethic" of Jesus is not considered normative, what do we do with it? That is to say, how can it be brought into play in shaping the ethical decisions which have to be made in this generation?

The truth of the matter is—and this is why we use the word "eisegesis" of this methodology—that in the assumption made about the normative value of Jesus' teaching and action we already find what might be described as a negative feed-back into the work of correct exegesis, vitiating *a priori* a correct understanding of Jesus' own position.

As a beginning to the task of bridging the gap between current ethics and the "ethic" of Jesus a more open approach would be to say, at the least, "let us suppose that the 'ethic' of Jesus was normative for us to-day" and then go on to see where the argument leads.

A different type of "eisegesis", approached from a different modern standpoint, and one which has had very far-reaching consequences in New Testament research in recent decades is that presented by the methodology of *Formgeschichte* and its allied study *Redaktionsgeschichte*. This also is eisegesis because it approaches the New Testament documents from the wrong end. It imposes on them an *a priori* theory and then proceeds to interpret them in the light of the fact that this theory was already an established critical conclusion.[5] Or, to put it another way, the procedure, often because of the paucity of primary sources, runs somewhat like this: from an internal study of the gospels the particular situation in which they arose is adduced; this situation is then made the criterion for evaluating the reliability of the particular parts (pericopae) of the gospel, the different strands of tradition that they represent, and, currently, the theological perspective of the author or compiler of the sources.[6]

[5] Even those who use the *Formgeschichte* method of approach to the Gospels have to admit its *a priori* nature. Thus, e.g., S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967), p. 3, says: "it would be reasonable, therefore, on *a priori* grounds, to suppose that the Markan account of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus may have been influenced by the situation from which the Gospel took its rise at Rome."

[6] Thus Brandon says, as a categorical statement without naming his sources, "the development of New Testament criticism has shown, with ever-increasing evidence, that the N.T. documents must be evaluated in terms of the ideas and needs of the particular communities in which, or for which, they were originally written" (*op. cit.*, p. xii). Against this point of view cf. J. A. Baird, *The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (1963), p. 25: "not only must one criticize the whole concept of the formation process that contributes so heartily to the current climate of historical skepticism; it is also necessary to go further and criticize the very methods that have been employed in arriving at such an extreme result."

Without in any way wanting to minimize the absolute necessity of talking about purpose when approaching the gospels it is not always realized just how weak this particular methodological approach is. Apart from the *argumentum in circulo* which is in itself inadmissible, it presents a fundamentally too limited view of the *Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche* because, too, often, it does not take sufficiently seriously the *Sitz im Leben des Ministeriums Jesu* which gave rise to it.

The assumption is made that the gospels derived from creative communities which reflected from their side of Easter on the strands of tradition which had been preserved from the other side, i.e. the "Historical Jesus" side of the Resurrection. Evidence for such creative communities can, in the nature of the case, only be derived from the documents themselves. Very often fictitious situations have to be adduced to account for this or that pericope. Such an assumption vitiates a study of the possibility that the creative elements in the tradition, i.e. the theological interpretation of the historical events, were already in the tradition when it arrived to the hand of the author.[7]

But even more important from the perspective of the present study is the fact that in a certain sense the methodology of *Formgeschichte* is not *a priori* enough. This observation, which is of considerable moment for our own methodological approach, we will try to explain in the following way.

The present debate about the "Jesus of History" and the "Christ of Faith" has become somewhat sterile. It has become sterile because the opponents of existential theology[8] have tended to debate the issue of pre- and post-Easter reality on the basis of the same set of presuppositions as those adopted by that point of view rather than challenging them on the basis of those presented

[7] I do not believe that we can be cynical about Luke's declared indebtedness in this sense. Luke-Acts ought to be interpreted in the light of his claim and not from *a priori* assumptions as to his purpose. It is puzzling how little notice has been taken of the work of B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (1961), who attempts to reverse the methodology of *Formgeschichte*. However, cf. W. D. Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 415ff. Could it be that this latter methodology will not admit criticism? Cf. the review of R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the O.T. in St. Matthew's Gospel* (1967), by G. W. Buchanan, *C.B.Q.* 30, 3 (1968), pp. 450-1; and of G. E. Ladd, *op. cit.*, by M. Rissi, *Th. Zeit.* 24, 3 (1968), pp. 222-3.

[8] For example, O. Cullmann, *Heils als Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1965), pp. 6-10; W. Rordorf, "The Theology of R. Bultmann and Second-Century Gnosis", *N.T.S.*, 13 (1966-7), pp. 351-62; W. Pannenberg, "Dogmatische Erwägungen zur Auferstehung Jesu", *Ker. Dog.* 14, 2 (1968), pp. 105-18.

from within the documents themselves.[9]

The debate has, therefore, been conducted within a framework much too limited, limited by the existential questions put to it by a philosophy for a time in vogue.[10] The result has been, amongst other things, a prolonged debate over the importance and place of the religious and theological background of the New Testament, e.g. Gnosticism and the Mystery Religions, because these especially seemed to answer the questions being put to the text by the exegetes.[11] Such evidence has an important place as possible source material in the understanding of the New Testament[12] but if taken by itself it limits far too much the possibility of our being able to understand the text.[13]

Today the questions being asked are different. A fresh approach to the political, cultural and social *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus Christ is becoming increasingly urgent, for the demand for an answer to the question of a normative ethic in the light of "revolution" cannot be met by driving a wedge between the so-called "Christ of Faith" and the "Jesus of history".[14] To this extent New Testament exegetes ought to be grateful for the challenge and the questions of "radical revolutionism" because they are thrown back to a thorough historical-exegetical reassessment of Jesus

[9] Cf. D. P. Fuller, "The Fundamental Presupposition of the Historical Method", *Th. Zeit.* 24, 2 (1968), pp. 93-101.

[10] Cf. R. W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutics and the Word of God,* for a good survey of the way in which current philosophical thought has influenced the methodology of exegesis.

[11] It would be interesting to speculate whether in fact answers were not being received from the New Testament text *in so far as* Gnostic and other influences were found there.

[12] It is still very doubtful that Gnosticism, even in an incipient form, let alone as it became developed in the second century, had much or any influence on the writers of the New Testament. Cf. J. M. Robinson, "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today", *N.T.S.*, 12 (1965-6), pp. 356-401; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII* (1966), p. lv.

[13] J. J. Vincent, "Discipleship and Synoptic Studies", *Th. Zeit.* 16 (1960), pp. 459-60, points out the inevitable conclusions of an *a priori* limiting of the exegetical task, particularly when the *a priori's* in question make it very difficult to take seriously historical writing in the Gospels: " 'faith' too often becomes a new kind of Gnosticism which denies the incarnation and the essentially this-worldliness of the Christian Life in its anxiety to preserve a God who is 'wholly other' ".

[14] Cf. A. Trocmé, *Jésus et la Révolution Non-Violente* (1961), p. 165: "On ne veut voir en lui qu'une sorte de 'yoghi' sublime, réfugié hors du monde, sur les rives de l'éternité, un ascète que aurait invité ses disciples à le suivre dans la solitude afin de leur enseigner un idéal sans rapport avec les problèms concrets de ce monde".

Christ in the light of the dominant concern of politics and of social ethics today, and in the light of the decision which Christ continually had to take in the context of a particular interpretation of messianic activity in his day and its relation to the armed overthrow of the political and religious status quo of first century Palestine.[15]

It is to a study of the quasi-religio-political movements within Judaism in the time of Christ and His attitude towards them both by word and deed, in the light of commitments being asked today of Christians by the revolutionary trends, that we want to turn.

Its aim is historical and exegetical. It is assumed that a detailed study of one of the climacteric episodes in the life of Jesus will produce enough evidence to point towards concrete conclusions concerning the position which Jesus adopted with regard to the "revolutionary" movements of His age and how He understood His own rôle as Messiah within that particular context.[16]

It has been decided to limit this study to only one of what might be called the critical points in the ministry of Jesus—the Temptation narrative. This is due both to the wealth of the material, the importance of the theme and the necessity of doing justice to the passages in as thorough an exegetical way as possible.

II

A. The Place of Temptation.

In each of the three synoptic gospels the word ἔρημος is used of the place where Jesus went after his baptism and where he was tempted by Satan.

Matthew and Mark emphasize the motive of the movement of Jesus into the wilderness: Matthew πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου,

[15] W. R. Farmer, *Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus* (1956), pp. 186ff., answers in the affirmative the question as to whether the Jewish nationalism of the first century throws new light on the old problem of the quest for the "Historical Jesus".

[16] This article cannot devote space to a consideration of Jesus' self-consciousness of his messianic role in the abstract. In the course of the discussion which follows the fact of such a self-consciousness as the only way to explain the evidence will become clear. For further discussion cf. I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion", *N.T.S.*, 12 (1965-6), pp. 327-51; R. Maddox, "The Function of the Son of Man according to the Synoptic Gospels", *N.T.S.*, 15 (1968-9), pp. 45-74; S. S. Smalley, "The Johannine Son of Man Sayings", *N.T.S.*, 15 (1968-69), pp. 278-301.

Mark τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει. Luke on the other hand is content to stress the movement of Jesus actually in the wilderness, where He was tempted by the devil, without giving any particular motive, within the immediate context, for His being there.[17]

The desert, as has been pointed out,[18] had, at the time of Jesus' ministry, a very definite messianic connotation. This association with the Messiah may be divided historically into two parts. In the first place there are the numerous allusions to actual messianic activity taking place in the desert. In the second place there is the theological connotation of the desert as the expected place of the inauguration of the messianic rule. We will consider these two aspects as an important background for the New Testament accounts of the Temptation.

Our sources for specific, concrete messianic activity in the desert are Josephus, Qumran and the New Testament. The Book of Acts in two places mentions what appear to be messianic uprisings. In Acts 5: 36-37 Gamaliel cautions a warning to the council not to condemn the apostles too quickly in case the new movement which they had initiated was of God. He compares the popular backing that it was receiving to two attempts to ignite the popular resentment felt in Israel against foreign domination into a major rebellion—the attempts made by Theudas and by Judas the Galilaean.[19]

In this account there are two significant words or phrases which could have messianic overtones. In verse 36 it is reported that Theudas claimed εἶναί τινα ἑαυτόν which, although it can be translated literally into the idiom, "claiming to be somebody", in

[17] εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, Luke 4: 1, the reading of A, N, Δ, Θ, Ξ, some Old Latin MSS. and the Syriac Versions, cannot be regarded as original. ἐν τῷ πνεύματι might be regarded as Luke's way of saying that the Holy Spirit was the agent that 'drove' Jesus into the wilderness, cf. E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (1966), p. 94.

[18] Cf. W. R. Stegner, "Wilderness and Testing in the Scrolls and in Mt. 4: 1-11", *Biblical Research*, xii (1967), pp. 18-27.

[19] It does not affect the main thrust of the present study whether Luke has got muddled in the order in which he reports the two uprisings. *A priori* there is no significant reason why Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 5.1 should be considered more accurate than Luke; nor, for that matter, why they could not be referring to two different men called Theudas, seeing that the name was common, and Josephus mentions many uprisings (e.g. *Ant.* xvii. 10. 4) without giving the names of the leaders. Further on this problem cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (1962), p. 147; J. W. Swain, "Gamaliel's Speech and Caligula's Statue", *H.T.R.* xxxvii (1964), pp. 341-9. What concerns us here is the account given in the Acts of these uprisings and their nature.

the context would seem to refer to a messianic claim. Even if he did not claim to be the Messiah he might well have claimed to be a forerunner who would prepare his way. The fact that four hundred joined him and were slain suggests that he presented a popular threat to the authorities. In verse 37 the verb ἀφίστημι is used of the activity of Judas the Galilaean with regard to the people. Two things ought to be noticed about its meaning in the context. In the first place the word itself has overtones of popular insurrections. Josephus uses it in this way in *Antiquities* viii. 198, and Herodotus in i. 76. We find an analogous use in an opposite sense in I Macc. 1: 15 and 2: 19. In the second place, and in its secondary application, the word means to "cause to withdraw". This, together with the qualifying ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ, suggests a movement away from the centres of population for a specific purpose. Although Luke does not actually mention a topographical site some such place as a desert would fit well the circumstances of the uprisings as he presents them.

The second place in which the same type of insurrectional activity is mentioned is Acts 21: 38. There the tribune, not very intelligently, confuses Paul with a certain Egyptian "who recently stirred up a revolt (ἀναστατώσας) and led the . . . men of the Assassins (τῶν σικαρίων) out into the wilderness (εἰς τὴν ἔρημον)". Josephus mentions, in more detail, and with some differences, the same Egyptian who led a multitude to the Mount of Olives promising that the city walls of Jerusalem would fall down at his word because he was a prophet.[20] The context in *De Bello Judaico* also includes the first mention of the dreaded *sicarii* (σικάριοι), the extremists within the Zealot forces. Josephus mentions their activities in Jerusalem and links the movement with others, στῖφος ἕτερον πονηρῶν, who "under the pretence of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes, persuaded the multitude to act like madmen, and led them out into the desert under the belief that God would there give them tokens of deliverence." [21] This is an important reference to one of the many movements under "charismatic" leadership that were causing the Roman governors of the time increasing trouble.

Directly after this general allusion Josephus reports the episode of the Egyptian who "had gained for himself the reputation of a prophet" and ". . . collecting a following of about thirty thousand

[20] *B.J.* ii. 13. 4ff; *Ant.* xx. 8. 6.
[21] *B.J.* ii. 13. 4.

dupes led them by a circuitous route from the desert to the mount called the mount of Olives." [22]

In both of the accounts of the episode of the Egyptian the desert, as the point of departure for the uprising, is mentioned. The fact that, according to Josephus, he claimed to be a prophet, and that Josephus called him a "false prophet" (ψευδοπροφήτης), and that in the previous paragraph Josephus has alluded to similar uprisings which drew away people into the desert in the belief that they would see "tokens of deliverance" (σημεῖα ἐλευθερίας), causes us to link very closely the desert with messianic expectation.[23]

There is one further episode that Josephus records which shows us the somewhat pathetic conviction that from the desert would finally come military and political deliverance for the faithful in Israel. In *B.J.* vi. 6.2. Josephus mentions the offer made by Titus to the besieged in Jerusalem when they had invited him to parley with them. Titus offered them their lives if they would surrender unconditionally. Their reply was that they could not accept the pledge he was offering them but, "they asked permission to pass through his line . . . undertaking to retire to the desert and to leave the city to him". The fact that they refused to surrender and that, when their request was turned down, they continued fighting can only mean that they expected some kind of final supernatural deliverance to appear in the desert to assure them of ultimate victory.

From the evidence cited from the Book of Acts and from Josephus it would seem that a very close identification was being made between the desert and the popular expectation of messianic activity.

[22] C. Roth, "The Zealots in the War of 66-73", *J.S.S.* iv (1959), p. 339, advances the theory that the Egyptian may possibly have been the leader referred to in the Habakkuk Commentary as the "Preacher of Lies". The evidence which he adduces, namely that the revolt started in the desert and involved a cleavage in the ranks of the *sicarii* reflected in the Commentary at v. 9-13, bears no weight at all unless one is prepared to date the document as late as A.D. 55, the date Roth gives to the uprising, or unless one is going to postulate an interpolation. The reference to the "Preacher of Lies" is vague and could refer to any leader of an insurrection or movement of apostasy. Roth underlines, however, the historical fact that the Zealot party had their base in what could, in general terms, be called the desert; cf. pp. 342, 347.

[23] Matt. 24: 26, "Lo, he is in the wilderness", which is unique to the first Gospel, certainly reflects both the current expectation that the Messiah would inaugurate his activity in the wilderness, and also the various episodes which Josephus records of leaders arising and drawing the people after them; cf. U. W. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* (1963), pp. 57-8, 146.

The evidence from the documents of Qumran is no less explicit. The two parts that are associated with the Messiah in the desert which we have already noted, namely the historical activity and the theological reflection, are brought together in the life of the community.

If the Covenanters were direct descendants of the *hasidim rishonim*[24] they did not flee to the desert merely to escape from possible persecution as their forebears (I Macc. 2: 29-31, 41), but rather to await there for the divine deliverance, preparing themselves in a state of moral and ritual purity for the advent of the anointed of God.[25]

In the War Scroll, Column i, Section I, 2 they called themselves "the desert dispersion" (*gôlath hammidbar*) who would begin the battle against the "sons of darkness" (*bnê hôshek*). This too, as the following column goes on to demonstrate, reflects a conscious adaptation on the part of the community to the discipline of the children of Israel in the desert wanderings.[26]

The famous text from Isa. 40: 3 undoubtedly played a big part in the "theological" understanding of the role in the desert. In the Manual of Discipline xviii. 12-16 we read: "now when these things come to pass in Israel to the Community, according to their rules, they will separate themselves from the midst of the session of perverse men to go to the wilderness to clear there the way of HUHA, as it is written: 'In the wilderness clear the way of. . . . ; level in the desert a highway for our God.' That means studying the Torah which he commanded through Moses, so as to do according to all that which the prophets revealed through his Holy Spirit."[27]

It is increasingly becoming clear that the Covenanters made a deliberate connection between the two ideas. On the one hand they saw themselves as the congregation of the wilderness of the last days (exiles who had separated themselves from the apostates of Israel, just as the *hasidim* earlier had separated themselves from the Hasmonean dynasty), withstanding the testing of Yahweh who would prove their faithfulness and send them the Messiah. In the wilderness at the end of the age the remnant would be found

[24] Cf. K. Schubert, *The Dead Sea Community* (1959), pp. 32-33.

[25] Cf. J. Coppens, "La piété des Psalmistes à Qumrân" (*La Secte de Qumrân et les Origines du Christianisme*, 1959), pp. 149-161.

[26] Cf. Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (1962), p. 38.

[27] The translation is that of C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (1956), p. 264.

faithful, unlike their forebears, and so present themselves as an offering to the Lord.[28] On the other hand they saw themselves as those who would truly fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah, ". . . so as to do all according to that which the prophets revealed . . ."; fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah implied "keeping the law" and "withstanding the period of testing".[29]

We find, then, that in the writings of Qumran the desert motif is linked with the two ideas of the typological fulfilment of the wilderness community in which the men of the covenant will come through their time of testing by strict adherence to the law of Moses, and of a preparation of a way in the last days before the arrival of the Messiah when God will restore to his people their land in true holiness.[30]

B. Temptation

Although some scholars deny that the main purpose of Jesus' sojourn in the desert, according to Mark, was to be tempted[31] there can be no doubt that according to Matthew (and probably in Luke also[32]) Jesus' stay in the desert was for the specific reason of being

[28] Damascus Document iii. 7. Cf. G. Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichtes*, p. 140, for the parallel between wilderness and testing; also W. R. Stegner, op. cit. pp. 20ff. Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls" (*The Scrolls and the New Testament*, 1957, ed. K. Stendahl), pp. 34-5, maintains that the eschatological desert of the coming of the Messiah had been localized as a district west of the Dead Sea as in Josh. 15: 61; II Chron. 26: 10. This is more probable than the wilderness of Sinai, as the desert referred to in the War Scroll is inhabited; cf. also R. Funk, "The Wilderness", *J.B.L.*, lxxvii (1959), p. 214. J. Bonsirven, *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ* (E.T., 1964), p. 73, maintains that the ideal for Israel continued to be that of the "community of the desert" gathered round the ark under the authority of Moses.

[29] I QS. ix. 20; 4QpPs. 37: 1-2 and other significant references in Stegner, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-5.

[30] The translation of A. R. C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning* (1966), p. 209, of the quotation from Isa. 40: 3 brings out this connection, "in the wilderness (the place of the testing of the people of God) prepare the way of . . . .; in the Arabah (the place of final deliverance and restoration after testing) they shall make straight a highway for our God".

[31] For example, H. Seesemann (*s.v.* πεῖρα, etc.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. VI, pp. 34-5.

[32] Πειραζόμενος, the present participle passive, corresponds to the continuous action implied in the verb, and suggests an action lasting the forty days. In the absence of any other motive for being "in the Spirit, in the wilderness" we can accept the fact that Luke continued the necessary connection between desert and testing which he found in his sources.

confronted by the hostility of the evil one.[33]

According to the general usage of the New Testament πειράζειν and πειρασμός have the double meaning, not always easily distinguishable, of inward temptation and outward testing.[34] This double meaning is well brought out in James in two passages (1: 2ff.; 1: 12ff.) where (at least in the latter case) James seems to be employing a kind of Midrashic exegesis or commentary on the account of the temptation and fall of Adam in Genesis 3.

It is not surprising, then, that some see in the temptation narrative of the Synoptics a kind of reversal of the fall of man when the second Adam emerges triumphant from the renewed conflict with the enemy.[35] In this sense the beasts may have either a negative (the fall of creation) or a positive (the proleptic redemption of creation) significance. What is clear from their inclusion in Mark is that Jesus was alone in the desert. This was a deliberate withdrawal away from the crowds and centres of population.[36]

The meaning and significance of πειράζειν in the context is governed by its agent, the διάβολος. It would, therefore, be legitimate to find reflected here the action of Satan as recorded in the prologue of Job.[37] In this sense Satan is the one who brings the man of God to the limit of his endurance, using every means he can conceive of, in order to make him go back on his commitment to the living Lord.

As the character and action of Satan was gradually revealed in the Scriptures so his fundamental opposition to the plan of God and the well-being of man are emphasized. In Matthew, apart from this passage, we find two other titles given to Satan which bring this point out. In the Lord's Prayer τοῦ πονηροῦ (Matt. 6: 13) is rightly understood in various modern translations as masculine and not neuter: "save us from the evil one". This description of Satan

[33] The infinitive πειρασθῆναι in Matt. 4: 1 can mean nothing else.

[34] Cf. Seesemann, *op. cit.*, p. 29; M. H. Sykes, "And Do Not Bring Us to the Test", *ET.*, lxxiii (1961-2), pp. 189-90.

[35] E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (1965), p. 6 says, "some evidence points to him (Jesus) as the second Adam engaged in a second duel with the Devil". Also G. H. P. Thompson, "Called-Proved-Obedient: A Study in the Baptism and Temptation Narratives of Matthew and Luke", *J.T.S.*, n.s., xi (1960), pp. 7-8.

[36] The accounts really do not allow for the highly speculative suggestion of A. P. Davies, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1956), pp. 111f., that the forty days were spent with the Qumran community. It is unlikely that their own internal organization would allow such a passing visit.

[37] So M. H. Sykes, *op. cit.*, p. 190; G. H. P. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

is characteristic of Matthew and brings out the futuristic as well as the present aspects of the prayer for deliverance. In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13: 24-30, 36-43) Satan is referred to as the enemy: ὁ δε ἐχθρὸς ὁ σπείρας αὐτά ἐστιν ὁ διάβολός. Here his work is placed in direct opposition to that of the Son of Man who sows the good seed, the word of the kingdom (Matt. 13: 18). The work of Satan is to destroy and to nullify the good effects which the preaching of the kingdom of God will have. His opposition is also seen in the perversion of the particular mission which the central figure of the kingdom has to fulfil.

There can be little doubt that the content of πειρασμὰς must be understood in the light of the fact that the temptation narrative is placed in between the account of the baptism of Jesus with its very definite messianic connotation—"thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3: 15); "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (3: 17)[38] and the account of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus seen in terms of the preaching of the kingdom[39] which, because of its proximity (ἤγγικεν), demanded an immediate response. The temptation is placed between the divine declaration of Sonship on the one hand and the public appearance of Jesus in Galilee on the other.[40]

There are two further factors that must be borne in mind, and to which we will return, in weighing the importance of the context. In the first place the ministry of Jesus began only after he had heard (ἀκούσας of Matt. 4: 12 suggests a casual relationship with His going into Galilee) of John's imprisonment—in other words when the movement surrounding John began to subside owing to the inactivity of its leader.[41] And in the second place the ministry of Jesus began, not in the place assigned by the prophecy of Isa.

[38] The phrasing of Matthew would seem to imply a direct appeal to the Jewish people, a public confirmation that in Jesus of Nazareth are fulfilled the messianic prophecies.

[39] So Best, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[40] Both the use in Matthew of ἀναχωρέω (4: 12) and the quotation from Isa. 8: 23-9: 1 have the intention of underlining the messianic activity of Jesus. Ἀπὸ τότε (4: 17) does not refer so much to the fact that Jesus had heard that John was in prison as to the fact that the light had now appeared once and for all in "Galilee of the Nations".

[41] On another occasion Jesus refuses to accede to the demands of the crowd (Mark 6: 45-6; John 6: 14-15). According to Matthew (14: 12-13) this took place after the death of John the Baptist, perhaps a suitable time for an uprising; cf. H. Montefiore, "Revolt in the Desert?" *N.T.S.*, 8 (1961-2), pp. 135-141.

40: 3—the desert—where the messianic pretenders had appeared, but rather in Galilee, according to the theophanic prophecy of Isa. 9: 1f. This simple factor, often overlooked, has far-reaching messianic implications and underlines the difference between the ministry of John (preparation) interpreted in the light of Isa. 40 and the ministry of Jesus (fulfilment) interpreted in the light of Isa. 9 (Matthew) and Isa. 61: 1f. (Luke 4: 17-19).

Undoubtedly the meaning and significance of the temptations themselves must be seen within this very carefully prepared historical and theological context.[42]

C. The Content of the Temptation

We have deliberately omitted a full discussion of the temptations themselves until this point because this corresponds to the methodological principle which we consider will most help us understand it and with it the whole ministry of Jesus of whose beginning it is a fundamental part.

The principle which we announced in the introduction seeks to take seriously into account the reality of the growing conflict between the Roman presence in Palestine and Jewish nationalism as this was frequently demonstrated in the outbreaks of messianic activity at the time.

If it is true, as S. G. F. Brandon asserts, [43] that Jesus of Nazareth could not have avoided facing the issues raised by this nationalism and making his own position clear with respect to it, then it is reasonable to suppose, bearing in mind the place of the temptation and its context in the gospel frameworks, that the temptations had something to do with the choice Jesus had to make.

It is surprising, therefore, that Professor Brandon, with all his insistence on the importance of the political factor in the understanding of the background of Jesus, should virtually deny that the

[42] All those interpretations of the Temptation narrative which consider the influence of the historical context as secondary to its understanding—e.g., J. Dupont, "L'Arrière-Fond Biblique du Récit des Tentations de Jésus", *N.T.S.*, 3 (1956-7), pp. 287ff.; G. H. P. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 6—fail to understand the acute nature of the historic choice which is presented in the temptations and to overwork the problem of Synoptic Criticism. The importance of the historical context in the understanding of the narrative is allowed by Mauser, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-9, and Best, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6.

[43] *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

temptations have to do with a messianic choice.[44]

Other recent attempts have been made to find an explanation for the temptations outside of the historic pressure which Jesus would have felt as he identified himself with the movement of John. G. H. P. Thompson, for example,[45] says, "the interpretation of the temptation narratives, outlined above, calls in question the tendency to regard the first two temptations of Jesus as 'messianic', in the sense that suggestions are put to Jesus that he should express his Messiahship in a particular way." However it must be asked with all seriousness whether Thompson has, in fact, interpreted the temptation narratives *in toto*. What he appears to have done is interpret a part of the narratives, namely the replies which Jesus gives to the suggestions of Satan, as these reflect a close link with

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 310ff. Brandon admits, following O. Betz, "Jesu Heiliger Krieg", *NovT.*, ii (1957-8), pp. 132-3; G. Delling, "Josephus und das Wunderbare", *NovT.*, ii, p. 297, and R. Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ, ii, pp. 591-9, that each temptation can be identified with some aspect of current messianic belief; and that Jesus' repudiation of each course of action offered to Him by Satan is consistent with the traditional view of its nature and character. However he prefers a completely different interpretation, namely, that the narratives were composed to refute the accusation made by the Pharisees that Jesus' messianic activities, and particularly His claim to world dominion, were inspired by Satan, and precipitated a crisis in the cleansing of the temple which resulted in his death, crucified as a rebel against the Roman Empire. It would be outside the scope of this essay to analyse the whole of Brandon's ingenious reconstruction which stands or falls as a unit (on this see the extended review of P. Sacchi, *Revue de Qumran*, 6, 23 (Feb. 1968), pp. 444-55, who points out the essential weakness in the way in which Brandon makes his assumptions and handles his evidence). However, with regard to his interpretation of the temptation narrative he does not seem to do justice to the material. In the first place his reconstruction would mean that the temptations were only to perform miracles, and that the performance of miracles was inspired by Satan (cf. p. 311). This accusation is clearly refuted elsewhere, in the Beelzebul passage (Mark 3: 20-30 and par.). In the second place, if the apologetic motive of the early church was as Brandon suggests, they did a bad job, or at least a confused one, because the narrative does not appear to agree that Jesus claimed world-dominion. In the third place the temptations are not only concerned with Satanic promptings (the motive to action) but with Satanic suggestion (the content of the actions). The alleged instances of parallels between the temptations and certain incidents in the life of Jesus (p. 312, n. 3) are not very convincing, and one cannot but suspect that they are introduced in order to support a theory which is already decided on other grounds.

[45] *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

the Israel of the wilderness days,[46] without really studying in detail the content of the temptations themselves.

This inevitably involves a partiality in the study of the episode which, in turn, leads him into a too superficial understanding of the nature of the temptations. The suggestion which he rightly dismisses, of Gutzwiller,[47] that the first temptation was a suggestion that Jesus should cater for the people's economic needs, is by no means the only way of understanding the messianic nature of the temptations, as we shall later show, nor one which a historic approach to the narrative demands. Thompson sets up and demolishes caricatures of the messianic approach. Without denying the plausibility of the literary approach, which he and others adopt, it is important to stress that the dismissal of the contemporary-historical approach is *a priori* and does not rest on sound exegetical principles.

We have already suggested that the Temptation narrative falls into two fairly well-defined parts: the temptation suggested by Satan and the reply given by Jesus. The narrative framework suggests the occasion of the temptation although it does not explain its motive.

The first temptation is introduced with a note stressing the humanity of Christ. In spite of the fact that John the Baptist had announced the coming of the Messiah in exalted terms drawn from Malachi (Matt. 3: 12; Luke 3: 17), in spite of the fact that the voice from heaven had declared him to be the Divine Son (Matt. 3: 17; Mark 1: 11; Luke 3: 22), Jesus was hungry. Immediately afterwards the evangelists record that Satan tempted Jesus.[48]

[46] J. Dupont, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-304, works out a similar kind of typology based on a literary approach between the narrative and the Old Testament quotations. He claims that only by starting from this point can the true meaning of the passage be understood (p. 287). However this approach is too limited. At the end of the article he opens the question of historicity and, up to a certain point, accepts a contemporary messianic motif (pp. 301-4). However, the question is basically one of methodology. Do we admit the validity, as a point of departure, of the historical approach along with the literary in the interpretation of the *whole* narrative or do we dismiss it a priori as do the radical form-critics; e.g. R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1953), p. 27; E. Percy, *Die Botschaft Jesu. Eine Traditionskritische und exegetische Untersuchung* (Lund, 1953), pp. 16-17?

[47] *Jesus, der Messias*, pp. 47-50.

[48] The προσελθών of Matt. 4: 3 dramatizes and focuses the specific nature of the temptation. It also accords well with the Matthean account that it was at the end of forty days that Jesus was tempted.

The fact of temptation is contained in the way in which the suggestion is put to Jesus. Satan plants a doubt in his mind, or at the least suggests a query: "If you are the Son of God." We can link this method with that used by Christ himself in the famous question on the relationship between the Christ and David (Mark 12: 35-37), "How do the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?" (the first question, which seeks to elicit a factual reply); "David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" (the second question, which seeks to elicit reflection). This second question of Jesus is not "how can he be his son?" but rather, "in what sense is he his son?" [49]

If we are right in understanding the method of Satan as suggesting to Christ that he reflects on the meaning of his Sonship rather than suggesting doubt as to its validity then we see the subtlety of the second half of the sentence, "command these stones to become loaves of bread", in the fact that Satan follows the challenge to reflect immediately with a suggestion as to its interpretation.

The reply to the temptation, given as a quotation from Deut. 8: 3, sets us within the historic context of Christ's ministry and its Old Testament background. It also allows us to understand the import of the turning of stones into bread. The emphasis of the quotation lies on the word "shall live" (ζήσεται), and the conflict with Satan is over the true source of real life. The Israelites had enjoyed their fill of the provision which God had made for their material needs and yet had not lived.[50]

[49] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (1959), pp. 381-3, recognizes this possibility but rejects it in favour of the first alternative, i.e., of a question (of academic interest only?) of fact as to how the scribes explain this difficulty. On an analogy with Mark 9: 12 it is impossible to think that Jesus could be attacking the Davidic descent of the Messiah. There is nothing in the passage to suggest (as does Cranfield) that Jesus is putting a merely academic question in order to get Himself out of a crisis situation. On the contrary the context says that He was teaching. It is natural to suppose, therefore, that the question is not a counter-question designed to avoid a trap, nor merely to impart teaching, which it does not do, but to challenge to serious reflection on the nature of the relationship between David and the Messiah. For this view cf. V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (1952), pp. 490-3: "the purpose of the saying is to challenge thought and decision". Once the purpose of the question is seen it can be appreciated how neatly it fits the historic circumstances of the debate over Messiahship and also its link, methodologically, with the question put by Satan.

[50] Cf. I Cor. 10: 5ff. Paul reverses the direction of the temptation. It is now man tempting God or rather defying God by not recognizing the only source of his complete physical and spiritual sustenance.

Later on it is Habakkuk who affirms that it is the righteous, *saddiq* (ὁ δίκαιος), who shall live (ζήσεται), by his faith.[51] Here he contrasts such a man with his opposite, the eminent man, whose soul is puffed up (*'uppelāh*) within him because of his riches, because of his completely misplaced trust.

The Covenanters understood Hab. 2: 4, according to their exegetical method, in terms of the historical exigencies of their situation. They followed Habakkuk in understanding *'emunah* in terms of the faithfulness of the remnant in facing resolutely the temptation of the historic situation in which they found themselves[52]: "But the righteous through his faithfulness shall live". The pesher comment on this is: "This refers to all in Judah who carry out the law. On account of their labour and of their faith in him who expounded the law aright, God will deliver them from the house of judgement." [53]

The reply of our Lord is to be understood within this dual textual background of Deut. 8: 3 and Hab. 2: 4. Man, in the given situation of challenge and choice which continually faces him, cannot exercise a living relationship of obedience and trust in God if his thoughts are centred on the material comfort and well-being of his life, for then he becomes, inevitably, like the "puffed up" man of Habakkuk.

The first temptation of Satan is further illustrated by two phrases from the Lord's prayer, "give us this day our daily bread . . . deliver us from the evil one." It would seem much more probable in the light of Matt. 6: 34 that the difficult word, ἐπιούσιος, retains

[51] Or probably more accurately, "by, in or according to his faithfulness"; cf. P. J. M. Southwell, "A Note on Habakkuk ii. 4", *J.T.S.*, n.s., xix, 2 (Oct. 1968), pp. 614-17.

[52] On Paul's understanding of ζήσεται in the text from Habakkuk cf. Jeremias, "Paul and James", *ET.*, lxvi (1954-5), p. 369.

[53] Th. H. Gaster, *The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect* (1957), p. 251, n. 27, has pointed out that the interpretation of the first part of Hab. 2: 4, "this refers to the fact that they will pile up for themselves a double requital for their sins, and shall not be quit of judgement for them", involves a play on words, *'uppelah*, "swollen", and *kāphal*, "double". In this way the thought of the author is centred on the passage from Isa. 40: 2, which had been taken as a key to their situation. The pesher of the Habakkuk Commentary is an almost exact reversal of the idea of Isa. 40. 2. Their interpretation emphasizes that they considered themselves as those to whom the prophet was originally speaking. Further, cf. A. Strobel, *Untersuchungen zum Eschatologischen Verzögerungsproblem* (1961), pp. 7-16.

the meaning, which traditionally it has been given, of "daily".[54] The prayer to be delivered from temptation (the test) and from the evil one (the tester) is exactly a prayer to be delivered from asking for the wrong thing and thus from diverting one's trust from the living God who supplies all our needs. To ask for tomorrow's bread today is to put oneself on the path towards being "swollen", which is self-sufficiency. This was one of the lessons that the Israelites had to learn in their desert wanderings.

Thus it can be seen that the force of the first temptation was double-pronged. Satan does not deny the Sonship of Christ but immediately suggests an interpretation of it which, in the first place, will divert Christ from his position of filial obedience (the parallel is, "Out of Egypt I called my son"), and, in the second place, will divert his messianic vocation, already identified in his baptism, from being "righteous" (*saddiq*) to being "puffed up" (*'uppelah*). In the historical context this can only be understood as a temptation to move towards that party which sought to collaborate with, or at least not to oppose, the forces of occupation and oppression.[55]

To be continued

Facultad Evangélica de Teologiá, Buenos Aires.

[54] When a word could have a variety of meanings according to its etymological usage, methodologically speaking the context should be the decisive factor in determining its precise application; cf. J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (1962), pp. 16-19, 154-5.

[55] Called in the Habakkuk Commentary (i. 13), "the House of Absalom". Cf. F. F. Bruce. *The Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran Texts* (1957), pp. 25-7; K. Schubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-41.