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Why did Jesus make his final journey to Jerusalem

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
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Thesis

WHY DID JESUS MAKE HIS FINAL
JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM?

by

Raymond Kenneth Beals
(A. B., Wittenberg College, 1939)

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requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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cop. 1

APPROVED

by

First Reader

N. J. Lowstater
Professor of New Testament
Literature and Interpretation

Second Reader

Edwin P. Booth
Professor of Historical Theology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	3
A. The Problem	3
1. The background of the problem	3
2. Divergent interpretations	6
3. Statement of the problem	7
B. Sources	8
1. The synoptic gospels	8
2. The work of other writers	9
C. Procedures	9
1. The study of the scriptural records	9
2. The study of various interpretations	9
3. The writer's own conclusions	9
II. THE SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM	10
A. The Change in Popular Feeling Toward Jesus	10
B. The Opposition of the Religious Leaders	16
C. The Political Situation	25
D. Jesus' Devotion to His Nation	31
III. THE VIEWS OF OTHER WRITERS	39
A. Denial of the Problem	40
B. Affirmation of the Problem	42
C. National and Religious Loyalty	45
D. Apocalyptic Interpretations	48
E. A Revolutionary Campaign	61
F. A Spiritual Program	66

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. CONCLUSIONS	74
A. Steps Toward a Solution of the Problem	74
B. Jesus' Thought About Himself	76
1. A unique relationship to God	76
2. A unique relationship to his fellow men	77
3. A unique sense of mission	78
C. Jesus' Thought About His Mission	79
1. The theme of his message—the Kingdom	79
2. The Kingdom and the nation	79
3. The Kingdom and the Messiah	80
D. The Alternatives Jesus Faced	82
1. Failure in Judea and Galilee	83
2. Abandonment of the mission	84
3. An appeal to the Gentiles	85
4. An appeal to Jerusalem	85
E. The Decision	85
1. A period of uncertainty	85
2. "The leaven in the meal"—Caesarea Philippi	86
3. Final confirmation—the transfiguration	87
4. "Stedfastly toward Jerusalem"	88
F. The Outcome	88
V. BIBLIOGRAPHY	89

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem.1. The Background of the Problem.

The early days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee were days of great popularity for the Master. Wherever he went, great crowds followed after him. Mark tells us that on one occasion such a crowd thronged about him that it was necessary for him to get into a boat in order to speak to the people.¹ On another occasion, such a crowd gathered about the house where Jesus and his disciples were staying that they were unable to eat their meal.² He could not escape the crowds even by retreating to the open country, for the people discovered his whereabouts and followed after him.³

Much of this popularity, however, was mere "surface enthusiasm." Almost from the beginning there were evidences of misunderstanding and opposition. Some of his friends said that he was "beside himself."⁴ The members of his own family came to take him home with them.⁵ The scribes and Pharisees accused him of being in league with the Devil.⁶ When he visited his home town of Nazareth, he was rejected by the congregation of the synagogue, who "rose up and cast him forth out of the city."⁷

¹ Mark 3:9.
² Mark 3:20.
³ Mark 1:45; 6:31-33.
⁴ Mark 3:21.
⁵ Matt. 12:46; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19.
⁶ Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15.
⁷ Luke 4:29; cf. Mark 6:1-6; Matt. 13:54-58.

The attitude of the religious leaders became one of open hostility. After first attempting to confute Jesus publicly,⁸ they began plotting with the Herodians to destroy him.⁹

As the period of the Galilean ministry drew to a close, Jesus had to face the fact that the people misunderstood him, the religious leaders were bitterly opposed to him, and the political authorities were suspicious of him. It was evident that he could no longer effectively continue his work in Galilee. He had come to his own and had been refused by them. He must now change his plans and go elsewhere.

The one bright ray of hope in the situation had been the gradual awakening of a more intelligent faith among his disciples. This found its highest expression in the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi,¹⁰ which seems clearly to have marked a turning point in the life of Jesus. He saw that the Kingdom must be built upon the kind of faith expressed in Peter's confession of his Messiahship. Having failed to win the people as a whole, he must now devote himself to the more thorough training of this small band of disciples, who would later "leaven the whole lump."¹¹

If the contention of this thesis is true, the events which followed the confession at Caesarea Philippi were part of a deliberately planned program which gradually took form in the mind of Jesus. Because of the failure of the people and their

⁸ Mark 3:1-5; 7:1-5; 2:16-18; 2:23,24; Matt. 12:1,2; Luke 6:1-7.

⁹ Mark 7:6-13.

¹⁰ Matt. 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21.

¹¹ Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:21.

leaders alike to understand and accept his program, and because of the imminent threat against his life, Jesus found it necessary to withdraw from Galilee. From this point on he had two great objectives. The first was to instruct his little band of disciples, helping them to understand more clearly the true nature of his Messiahship, and to prepare them for the parts which both he and they would be called upon to play in the establishment of the Kingdom. The second objective was nothing less than the bold attempt to carry his appeal to the very heart of the national life by appearing at the temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover.

Whatever the reason for that final hazardous journey to Jerusalem, the records indicate quite clearly that it was made. Luke says simply, "when the time was come that he should be delivered up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."¹² Although this statement implies an element of interpretation on the part of the gospel writer, subsequent events corroborate this contention that Jesus was determined to go to the capital.

Luke follows this statement with the fullest account of the so-called "Perean ministry,"¹³ the period between the final departure from Galilee and the final arrival in Jerusalem. The other synoptists give us no reason to doubt the common view that on this last journey Jesus and his disciples passed through Samaria, thence into the borders of Judea be-

¹² Luke 9:51.

¹³ Luke 9:51--19:28.

yond the Jordan, and finally to Jerusalem by way of Jericho, a route commonly taken by pilgrims from Galilee and Perea when they went up to the capital.¹⁴ But as to the specific reason or reasons for undertaking such a dangerous journey to Jerusalem in the face of strong and growing opposition, none of the gospels has a clear word to say.

Why did Jesus make this final journey to Jerusalem? It must have been quite clear to him that the danger was even greater there than in Galilee. Could he foresee the events of that last dreadful week? Did he know that a cross awaited him there? Did he hope to win over the religious leaders to an acceptance of his program? Did he expect to start a popular uprising? Did he go merely in order to carry out the religious observances of his people? What other alternatives, if any, were open to him? In the light of such questions as these, it becomes apparent that the decision to go to Jerusalem was a vitally important one, and that an understanding of the factors which led to that decision would give us a profound insight into the mind of the Master. It would help us to understand more clearly the self-consciousness of Jesus and his own conception of his mission.

2. Divergent Interpretations.

Many different answers have been given to the question which forms the title of this thesis. Some have said that

¹⁴ Usually to avoid Samaria. In the case of Jesus because the direct road was barred. (Luke 9:51-56)

Jesus went to Jerusalem at this time simply because he was a loyal Jew and would therefore naturally want to be in the city at the time of the Passover. Others assume that the final journey to Jerusalem, like all of the other events in the life of Jesus, was planned from the beginning by God, his Father, and that Jesus had an intuitive knowledge of what God expected him to do. Some have maintained that Jesus was a "thorough-going apocalypticist" and believed that by going to Jerusalem at that time he could bring about a divine intervention and the establishment of the New Order. Still others have suggested that this last journey was actually a march on the capital for the purpose of instituting an uprising among the people. Other writers picture Jesus as a man with a divine message, pondering alternative ways and means of effectively presenting that message to his people so as to win their acceptance.

3. Statement of the Problem.

Consideration of these divergent views will make the significance of our question at once apparent. If only we could gain a clear understanding of the considerations which led Jesus to decide to go to Jerusalem after his departure from Galilee, we would have a clue to a better understanding of both the man and his message.

It will be our purpose in this thesis to make a careful study of the factors which influenced Jesus in arriving at the decision to make his final journey to Jerusalem, that through such a study we may achieve an insight into the mind

of Jesus and a better understanding of his teachings.

B. Sources.

In our study we shall limit our attention for the most part to the material presented in the first three, or synoptic, gospels. We shall do this, not merely because Matthew, Mark and Luke present, in the main, a unitary view of Jesus' life and teachings,¹⁵ but primarily because studies in the field of New Testament criticism have given us reason to believe that the writers of the first three gospels were much closer to the original sources, and are thus likely to present a more accurate account of historical events. The gospel of John was written with a doctrinal rather than an historical motive.¹⁶ Its purpose is to set forth the religious significance of Jesus rather than to present an accurate account of the events of his life. It moves in the realm of interpretation rather than of history. There is a general agreement among modern scholars that the fourth gospel cannot be used as an historical source with the same degree of confidence with which the other three gospels may be used. Thus, in confining ourselves to the synoptic tradition, we are following the course suggested by the findings of modern historical scholarship. In any case, there would be little reason to refer to the gospel of John in our present study, since it is concerned almost entirely

¹⁵ E. W. Burch in ABC, 870.

¹⁶ A. E. Garvie in ABC, 1060.

with events which took place in or near Jerusalem itself.

In addition to the use of the synoptic gospels for the historical background of our study, we shall find frequent occasion to refer to the writings of both ancient and modern scholars in the field of New Testament study and interpretation. Chapter III will be given over entirely to such a study.

C. Procedures.

Our study falls into three natural divisions. In Chapter II we shall outline the factors leading up to the decision to go to Jerusalem as these factors appear in the synoptic records themselves. In Chapter III we shall present a summary of the divergent interpretations appearing in the writings of modern scholars. Finally, Chapter IV will be given over to a summary of the present writer's own conclusions with regard both to the reasons underlying the decision and the significance of that decision as a key to the understanding of the mind and message of Jesus.

CHAPTER II. THE SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

A. The Change in Popular Feeling Toward Jesus.

We have already indicated¹⁷ that when Jesus began his ministry in Galilee he was given an enthusiastic reception by the people. From the very first day of his public ministry he attracted great attention, and his reputation spread rapidly. Mark reports that after the first day of ministry in Capernaum "immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee."¹⁸ Of course, part of his popularity was due to his healing miracles. While he was tarrying at the home of Simon and Andrew, "they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils, and all the city was gathered together at the door."¹⁹ Jesus clearly tried to avoid the reputation of a "miracle-worker" by hurrying on to the next towns,²⁰ and by asking those whom he healed to "say nothing to any man."²¹ Yet the news of these miracles was so noised abroad that "Jesus could no more enter into the city, but was without in the desert places, and they came to him from every quarter."²²

However, the interest of the crowd was not alone in the miracles of healing. They were also profoundly impressed with what Jesus had to say. "His way of speaking and his actions

¹⁷

¹⁸ p. 3.

¹⁹ Mark 1:28.

²⁰ Mark 1:32,33.

²¹ Mark 1:37,38.

²² Mark 1:44.

Mark 1:45.

produced that feeling of amazement, of religious terror which one feels when one is in the presence of something which transcends ordinary human power. (Mark 1:22,27; 2:12)."²³ After the healing of the man sick with the palsy, on the occasion of the second visit to Capernaum, the people in the crowd "were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion.'"²⁴ Then they followed him to the seaside, where he taught them. In both the acts and the words of Jesus the people began to sense a new note of power which differed from the preaching of the rabbis to whom they had been accustomed to listen. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."²⁵

There were two reasons, however, why Jesus' popularity in Galilee was neither deep-rooted nor long-lived. One was the fact that Jesus himself did not encourage an unthinking, bellicose following, and indeed seems to have made every effort to avoid being made the leader of a popular movement. The other reason was the appearance of a deputation of scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem who sought to discredit Jesus with the people.

Jesus well knew the dangers of attracting a large crowd whose unreasoning enthusiasm would hinder his work. He realized that such a following would thwart his purpose to intro-

²³ Goguel, LJ, 332.

²⁴ Mark 2:12.

²⁵ Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22.

duce a spiritual Kingdom. On the one hand, most of them would be following him because of his provision for their physical comfort, or because of his miracles, or because they felt that he was the long awaited Messiah who was to lead them to victory over their national enemies. On the other hand, such a following would inevitably arouse the suspicions of the political authorities, who were in constant fear of a general uprising—a revolt which would more probably begin in Galilee than in any other quarter.

Jesus was especially careful, therefore, to avoid the Messianic issue, and tried by every means at his disposal to impress upon his hearers the true nature of the Kingdom he had come to proclaim. Near the close of that day marked by the "Feeding of the Five Thousand,"²⁶ when the multitude seems to have attempted to force Jesus to become their leader, he dismissed the people, urged the disciples to cross the sea in a boat, and retired to a solitary place where he might be alone in meditation and prayer. This incident seems to have marked a climax in Jesus' popularity in Galilee. Afterward the crowds evidently lost their enthusiasm. Jesus himself later spoke of his work at Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum as though it had proved an almost complete failure.²⁷ The crowds, intent upon physical health and miraculous signs, were dissatisfied

²⁶ Matt. 14:13-23; Mark 6:30-46; Luke 9:10-17.

²⁷ Matt. 11:20-24.

with the kind of ethical and spiritual food Jesus gave them. They had hoped that he was the Messiah who should bring about the triumph of Israel, and he had clearly rejected their efforts to make him such a leader.

"Just when the popular favor is brought to its height by Jesus' feeding of the multitude on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, he himself pricks the bubble by resolutely refusing to be such a prophet and Messiah as they desire, and presenting in its barest and to the people most unattractive form the exclusively spiritual character of his mission. Not bread such as Moses gave, but his own spirit and teaching--this is what he has to give to those who will follow him. Many of his disciples go back, and walk no more with him, but the Twelve remain true."²⁸

A clear indication of increasing hostility and the change in popular opinion is given in the story of the rejection at Nazareth.²⁹ Luke puts the story at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, but the whole situation, and especially the reference to miracles which had already been wrought in Capernaum, seem to indicate the later date which both Matthew and Mark give it. Jesus seems to have been received in the town of his boyhood with general favor, or at least with curiosity, for he was asked to preach in the synagogue. However, as he spoke, he was astonished at their unbelief, and the people were angered against him, for he made claims which to them were nothing short of blasphemy.³⁰ Luke records that the hostility of the people was so strong that a murderous attempt

²⁸ Burton and Mathews, LC, 143.

²⁹ Matt. 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-30.

³⁰ Luke 4:28-30.

was made upon his life. This incident is hardly to be explained merely on the grounds of jealousy. It seems evident that there were many, even in Nazareth, whose religious zeal had been so aroused by the enemies of Jesus that they were ready to rise up against him. Whatever the cause, the incident is a clear indication that the tide of popular opinion was changing and that people were no longer ready to listen to him with the enthusiasm they had had at an earlier date.

Hill³¹ mentions three other evidences of the change in popular feeling. One is the use of parables as a means of conveying the truth he wished to impart. Hill argues that Jesus usually put his teaching in the form of parables when his audience was made up partly of sympathetic hearers and partly of enemies waiting to trap him by his words. Thus the aim of the parables might have been, as Rhees says, to "teach the teachable and perplex the critical."³² The one group would be instructed by what Jesus had to say, while the other would be baffled and would be unable to find any specific grounds for making charges against him. A second incident to which Hill calls attention is the question of John the Baptist, who was beginning to have some doubts as to whether or not Jesus was really the Messiah.³³ Jesus replied, not with an open affirmative, but with a reference to a prophecy of

³¹ Hill, LC, 143 f.
³² Rhees, LJC, 129.
³³ Matt. 11:3.

Isaiah.³⁴

"If John, with all his confidence and devotion, found it difficult to believe that Jesus was establishing the kingdom of God, how many of those who lacked John's intimate knowledge of Jesus' sinlessness and high calling must not only have stumbled in following but have turned back in utter unbelief!"³⁵

Hill further argues that the separate mission of the twelve was undertaken as a final attempt to win Galilee after Jesus had been hindered in his work by the constant presence and increasing opposition of his enemies. He argues that they were sent out in this manner, not merely because they could reach a wider audience or because they needed the training, but also because, working apart from Jesus, they might possibly escape the antagonism which he constantly encountered. Before sending the disciples out Jesus warned them that they were being sent as sheep among wolves,³⁶ and that they must expect to find opposition which would shut them out of many places.

The discussion might be prolonged, but sufficient evidence has been given to indicate that the change in popular feeling among the people of Galilee, rising at times to the point of active opposition, was probably one of the factors affecting the decision of Jesus to withdraw from the north and set his face in the direction of Jerusalem.

". . . the popular enthusiasm subsided, and

³⁴ Isa. 61:1-3.
³⁵ Hill; LC, 145.
³⁶ Matt. 10:16.

his active work with the common people was at an end. But he had held off this crisis until there were a few who did not follow the popular defection, but rather clung to him from whom they had heard the words of eternal life (John 6:68)."³⁷

B. The Opposition of the Religious Leaders.

We have seen the indications of a change in public opinion which made Jesus' continued work in Galilee practically impossible. The materialistic and revolutionary ambitions of the people had been raised to the highest pitch, only to be disappointed when Jesus refused to become the kind of Messianic leader they expected and when he told them that they sought food for their bodies rather than food for their souls.³⁸

There was, however, a more significant reason for the increasing hostility of the people. As the influence of Jesus began to spread he came more and more into disfavor with the religious leaders of his day. Their opposition was so serious and their hold upon the public so strong that Jesus was finally forced to come into open conflict with them, taking a deliberate and open stand against the shallow formalism of the scribes and Pharisees.

To understand the significance of this conflict with the religious authorities, we need only to recall the important part which organized religion played in the life of the Jewish nation. The heart of the religion, and indeed of the life, of

³⁷ Rhees, L.J.N., 123.
³⁸ See John 6:26,27.

the orthodox Jews was a rigid adherence to the Law, the study of which was the business of the scribes, and the keeping of which was the chief delight of the Pharisees. By the very nature of their convictions both the scribes and the Pharisees might be expected to find fault with Jesus for his lack of strictness in keeping certain laws and observing certain ceremonies, as well as for his open association with "sinners."³⁹ Theirs was a religion of rules; his was a religion of the spirit. The two conceptions of religion came inevitably into conflict.

In the beginning of his work in Galilee Jesus carefully avoided a breach with the scribes and Pharisees. He realized that there was much that was of value in their character and in their work. Doubtless as a youth he had shared the popular respect for them.

"His references to them in his early parables, as, for example, the father's words to the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son, were always courteous and conciliatory."⁴⁰

The religious leaders, on their side, seem to have paid little attention to him in the beginning, so that it was possible for him to carry on his work for a time without official opposition. On the occasion of his first visit to Capernaum, even the Sabbath cure in the synagogue passed unchallenged."⁴¹

"In freer Galilee the Pharisees were not so strong as in Jerusalem; yet here, too, they were

³⁹ Mark 3:1-5; 2:16-18,23-24; Matt. 12:1,2; Luke 6:1-2, etc.

⁴⁰ Kent, LTJ, 223.

⁴¹ Mark 1:21-34; Luke 4:31-41.

the acknowledged leaders in piety as the scribes were the recognized authority in religion. They had no occasion to oppose Jesus at first. To them he was one of many teachers seeking to instruct the people in the way of righteousness. He made no attack upon the law, and he and his disciples attended the synagogue and went up to the great feasts at Jerusalem."⁴²

As his following increased, however, the scribes and Pharisees became first suspicious, then critical, and finally entered into a conspiracy to overthrow the religious fanatic and heretic from Nazareth. They were alarmed both by the radical nature of his teachings and by his success in winning the attention of the people. They began to realize that Jesus had a different conception of religion which, should it win popular approval and acceptance, would overthrow both their teachings and their authority. From their point of view Jesus was guilty of the worst kind of blasphemy. His preposterous claims and his laxity with regard to their sacred Law and ceremonies marked him as a dangerous heretic and a threat to organized religion. Here again was an expression of the old struggle between the prophets on the one hand and the priests and legalists on the other. The attitude of the religious authorities toward Jesus finally became one of bitter and vigorous hostility.

The opposition came not from the scribes and Pharisees of Galilee alone. Indeed their opposition seems to have been aroused by a group of men sent down from Jerusalem, perhaps by the Sanhedrin, to report on and, if possible, to repress this

⁴² Rall, LJ, 88.

dangerous movement.⁴³

The first incident which gives a clear indication of official criticism and hostility was in connection with the healing of the paralytic let down through the roof of the house where Jesus was staying.⁴⁴ Here indignation was aroused against Jesus by his apparent claim to forgive sins. A crowd had assembled in and about the house in order to hear Jesus teach. Pharisees and doctors of the Law, some of them from Judea and Jerusalem, were present to hear and to watch.⁴⁵ When the sick man was brought in Jesus said to him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."⁴⁶ Unspoken resentment filled the hearts of the scribes. They were astonished that Jesus should in this bold manner attempt to usurp the authority of the priests, for it was they alone, as God's appointed representatives, who could declare sins forgiven, and then only after proper penance and sacrificial offerings. As Headlam points out,

"... the criticism was not unreasonable. Jesus was making claims which demanded acceptance or rejection. An attitude of toleration was hardly possible."⁴⁷

Yet the scribes dared not speak out against him, for the prophets had taught that forgiveness did not depend upon penance or sacrifices, and they themselves had pronounced

⁴³ Mark 3:22; 7:1.

⁴⁴ Mark 2:1-12.

⁴⁵ Luke 5:17.

⁴⁶ Mark 2:5.

⁴⁷ Headlam, LTJC, 194.

sins forgiven.⁴⁸ When Jesus followed his rebuke with the miracle of healing the crowd was so deeply stirred that they dared not say anything, but their hostility had been aroused.

To declare that a man's sins were forgiven was bad enough, but a more serious point of cleavage between Jesus and the religious leaders of his day appears in their irreconcilable views of holiness. This conflict finds expression, for example, in Jesus' open association with "forbidden" persons. Jesus had not only admitted one of the hated publicans into his intimate circle of disciples,⁴⁹ but he was also quite willing to enter his house and to eat with "publicans and sinners".⁵⁰ To the orthodox Jews, such conduct was unbearable. Rall summarizes the two points of view when he says,

"The Pharisee thought the other man's impurity would infect him; Jesus hoped his purity would infect the other man."⁵¹

Another serious breach with the Pharisees took place⁵² over the question of the ceremonial washing of hands. Jesus and his disciples apparently disregarded such purely ceremonial matters. He was so concerned about the spiritual significance of things that he did not hesitate to sacrifice the passing forms. For the Pharisees, these traditions had all the force and sacredness of law; for Jesus, even the Old Testament itself was subject to a higher standard of moral author-

48 e. g., II Sam. 12:13.

49 Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27.

50 Mark 2:14-17.

51 Rall, in ABC, 894.

52 Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23.

ity.⁵³

"Jesus was bringing the new religion of the Spirit and the old religion of letter and form, of ritual and rule, must pass away."⁵⁴

In answering those who criticized him and his disciples for their failure to observe the ceremonial washing of hands, Jesus uttered his most bitter denunciation of a purely ritualistic religion which was extremely exacting with regard to forms, but which was indifferent to the deeper matters of the spirit.

Another dispute arose over the question of fasting.⁵⁵ While Jesus in no sense discouraged fasting, his own neglect of the official fast-days observed by the strict Pharisees and his failure to teach his disciples to fast gave rise to criticism. Asked why he and his disciples did not fast as did the Pharisees and the disciples of John, Jesus replied, in effect, that fasting should be an outward expression of an inward frame of mind, and that men should use the forms only when they express the spirit.

One of the most serious causes of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was the question of Sabbath-observance. In the eyes of the latter, "the very existence of their religion was bound up with the observance of the Sabbath."⁵⁶ The fourth commandment had been enlarged and guarded by a multi-

⁵³Matt. 5:21,22.

⁵⁴Rall, L.J., 90.

⁵⁵Mark 2:18-22.

⁵⁶Rall, in ABC, 895.

tude of rules and restrictions which made the observance of the Sabbath

"the supreme illustration of empty formalism,—an emphasis of letter instead of spirit, of sacrifice instead of mercy."⁵⁷

Jesus, looking beyond the letter of the Law to its spirit, believed that humanity was more important than ritual.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."⁵⁸

When his disciples were criticized for plucking wheat on the Sabbath, he quoted the example of David, who, with his followers, had eaten the sacred loaves to satisfy their hunger.⁵⁹

Criticized for healing on the Sabbath, he replied that the Sabbath was a day for saving life, not for destroying it.⁶⁰ (Mark follows immediately with the comment that it was on this very Sabbath that the Pharisees

". . . straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him."⁶¹

In his dealing with the Sabbath question Jesus was touching the most sacred prejudices of Judaism, for it was the Sabbath observance more than anything else which preserved the separation between Jew and Gentile. So strict were the orthodox Jews in this observance that during the Maccabaeen revolt more than a thousand refugees are said to have been massacred in a cave without making any defense, rather than be guilty of

⁵⁷ Hill, LC, 140.
⁵⁸ Mark 2:27.
⁵⁹ Mark 2:26.
⁶⁰ Mark 3:4.
⁶¹ Mark 3:6.

breaking the Sabbath.⁶² It is not difficult, therefore, to understand why the Pharisees should become enraged and look upon Jesus as a dangerous transgressor. When Jesus healed the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, they could bear it no longer. They left immediately to seek an alliance with the Herodians in order to overthrow him.⁶³

With all their logic, the Pharisees could not deny the miracles of Jesus; they had to be explained. Their answer was that the miracles were actually performed by Satan, working through Jesus. Mark⁶⁴ and Matthew⁶⁵ place the charge that Jesus cast out demons by the help of Beelzebub (a common name for Satan) in the mouth of the pharisaic scribes, but Luke⁶⁶ attributes it to a few who spoke for the crowd. If the people could be made to accept such an interpretation, the power of Jesus would be destroyed; the crowd would forsake him and no one would accept his teachings.

Hill⁶⁷ points out that in making this charge of "diabolism" the Pharisees were probably very sincere. They felt, and the Law itself had stated⁶⁸ that the character of a miracle must be determined by the character of the man who wrought it, and

"... the Pharisees found proof, to their minds strong, that Jesus was an evil-minded man. They pointed out his fondness for feasting instead of fasting, which showed him to be a glutton and a wine-bibber; His delight

⁶² Headlam, LTJC, 196.

⁶³ Mark 3:6.

⁶⁴ Mark 3:22-30.

⁶⁵ Matt. 12:24.

⁶⁶ Luke 11:14, 15.

⁶⁷ Hill, LC, 141 f.

⁶⁸ Deut. 13:1.

in the society of publicans, harlots and other outcasts; his slight valuation of washing, tithes, circumcision and such legal ordinances; and above all, his deliberate disregard for the Sabbath. Was it not manifest to any thoughtful critic that this man was a child of Satan, and that he was deliberately seeking to lead the people into sin? If so, his miracles were lying wonders, wrought by the powers of evil."⁶⁹

The misunderstanding of the Pharisees was complete. They had ignored the spirit of love and truth which was manifest in all of Jesus' teachings and works, and had been willing to believe that the good things he had done were for an evil purpose. Their attitude was one which utterly destroyed moral distinctions. They were, in effect, pronouncing light to be darkness and good to be evil. Against such willful blindness, which was a sin against the Holy Spirit, Jesus was compelled to take an open stand. His denunciation was bold and bitter.⁷⁰

Both the religious leaders and the people had misunderstood Jesus. The people still gathered about him, chiefly out of curiosity or out of hope for personal gain, but they had failed to grasp the significance of what he had to say. The opposition of the religious leaders had reached a point where they were plotting with the secular authorities to bring about his overthrow. Both of these facts warned of the impending crisis, and affected Jesus' decision to leave Galilee and set out upon the journey to Jerusalem. But there were other factors to be considered, and we turn next to a brief consideration of the political situation.

⁶⁹ Hill, LC, 142.
⁷⁰ Mark 7:6-13.

C. The Political Situation.

Opposition to Jesus came not only from the religious leaders. Even more serious at the moment was the constant threat of seizure by the secular authorities. By themselves, the scribes and Pharisees could do nothing more than to attempt to discredit Jesus with the people. However, if they should succeed in convincing the political rulers that Jesus was a dangerous man, and one likely to institute an insurrection, his arrest, detention, and perhaps execution, were assured. The fate of John the Baptist⁷¹ left little doubt as to the kind of treatment which might be expected at the hand of Herod Antipas. Josephus states quite definitely that John was put to death for purely political reasons:

"Now when many came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause; and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late."⁷²

Galilee had long been a hotbed of revolt. There had been a feeling of rebellion against Rome almost from the time when the Romans had assumed power over the Jews⁷³ and this rebellious spirit was especially evident among the liberty-loving people of the north country. Herod, as a young captain under

⁷¹ Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9.

⁷² Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII, 5, 2.

⁷³ For a thorough discussion of this aspect of the problem, see Simkhovitch, Toward the Understanding of Jesus.

Hyrceanus, had quelled one open revolt by killing Ezechias of Galilee and a large number of his followers. The movement broke out again with fanatical fury under the leadership of Ezechias' son, Judas the Gaulonite. The occasion for this Zealot revolt under the leadership of Judas was the census of Quirinius for taxation purposes in the year 6 A. D., the same census which, according to Luke,⁷⁴ brought Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to Jesus.

The revolt of Judas was unsuccessful, but it made a deep impression upon the minds of the people, and is mentioned in the Acts:

"After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed."⁷⁵

Simkhovitch points out that a consideration of the revolt of Judas is important for the understanding of Jesus, since

"... the ideas for which Judas stood did not die with him, but were spreading and increasing till all of Judea and Galilee were in a veritable conflagration. ... the difference in attitude between the Zealots and the Pharisees was that the former resisted with the drawn sword, while the submission of the latter was but passive resistance, with a heart full of resentment but with an arm too feeble or a mind too cautious to grasp the sword."⁷⁶

These considerations lend a special significance to the question which the Pharisees put to Jesus,

⁷⁴ Luke 2:1-6.

⁷⁵ Acts 5:37.

⁷⁶ Simkhovitch, TUJ, 9 f.

"Is it lawful (i. e., religiously permissible) to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"⁷⁷

The inquirer well knew that an affirmative answer would make Jesus very unpopular with a Jewish audience, while a negative answer would lay him open to the charge of revolt. Instead of giving a categorical "yes" or "no", Jesus answered the question with the words,

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."⁷⁸

His reply indicates something of his attitude toward the political problem of his day. He was not indifferent to the sufferings of his people, but he was much more strongly concerned about their spiritual needs. He tried to get them to see the proper relationship between their religion and their nationalistic ambitions. The Jews had invited, indeed urged, the Romans to take their country under protection. They had accepted Rome's protection, and their coins bore the image of Caesar. Taxation was not a religious problem, but an economic and political one. Their concern over such matters should not blind them to their deeper obligation to God and to their divine mission. They had allowed their concern over secular problems to take precedence over their deeper and more important problem, which was essentially spiritual in character.

During the period of Jesus' ministry, Herod Antipas was the tetrarch of Galilee. (Mark erroneously calls him "King Herod," the title borne by his father, Herod the Great. By

⁷⁷ Matt. 22:17; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:22.
⁷⁸ Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25.

his will, which the Roman government had confirmed, Herod had divided his kingdom among three sons, giving Judea, Samaria and Idumaea to Archelaus; Galilee and Perea to Herod Antipas; and the region northeast of the Sea of Galilee to Philip. Philip appears to have ruled quietly and justly until his death in 34 A. D., but Archelaus was such a poor ruler that he was deposed by Augustus in 6 A. D., and his realm became the imperial province of Judea, ruled by a procurator as the representative of the emperor. Herod Antipas has been described as

" . . . a man of passionate temper, with the pride and luxury of his father. . . . he was sly, and worked often by indirection. While his father had energy and ability which command a sort of admiration, Antipas was not only bad but weak."⁷⁹

Concerning the family of the Herods, Farrar makes a harsh, though in some measure justified, judgment when he says,

"Judea might well groan under the odious and petty despotism of these hybrid Herodians--jackals who fawned about the feet of the Caesarean lions. Respect for 'the powers that be' can hardly, as has been well said, involve respect for all the impotences and imbecilities."⁸⁰

Among the people themselves there were many who thought it best for their own interests and also for the interests of their country to champion the claims of the Herodian family. This is, undoubtedly, the group referred to as the "Herodians" in the New Testament.⁸¹ They were essentially a political

⁷⁹ Rhee, L.J.N., 5.

⁸⁰ Farrar, L.C., 407.

⁸¹ Matt. 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13.

party rather than a religious sect. Rhees says, concerning them,

" . . . They were probably more akin to the Pharisees than to the Sadducees, for the latter were hostile to the Herodian claims, from the first; yet in spirit they seem more like to the worldly aristocracy than to the pious scribes."⁸²

While some have tended to minimize the possibility of active interference by Herod Antipas in the work of Jesus, it is highly improbable that Herod should be unaware of, or indifferent to, the work of the Galilean who was attracting such a large following, and who was preaching that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."⁸³ Living at Tiberias, he could not have failed to hear about Jesus and his teaching from the very beginning, and he must have been struck by the similarity between the work of Jesus and that of John, whom he had beheaded. According to Mark, when Herod heard about Jesus he said,

"It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead!"⁸⁴

Mark offers evidence that Herod was interested in the apocalyptic speculations of the day.⁸⁵ It is not at all improbable that his superstitious thoughts would lead him to fear that John had been Elijah returned to earth to prepare the way for the appearance of the Son of Man and the inauguration of the

⁸² Rhees, L.J.N., 14.

⁸³ Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 8:11; 11:7-15; Luke 22:29; Mark 1:15.

⁸⁴ Mark 6:16.

⁸⁵ Mark 6:14-16, 20.

Messianic era.

However, if we are to judge from what we know of Herod's character, we may be sure that his interest in Jesus was not primarily a moral or religious one.

"We may take it that Herod was moved, neither by superstition nor by qualms about John's fate, but solely by political considerations; he knew perfectly well that in the people's mind this coming Kingdom had a political complexion, and feared lest at a sign of insurrection the Romans would step in, glad of a pretext for sending him to share the fate of his brother Archelaus."⁸⁶

It seems far more likely that the Jewish leaders were succeeding in their efforts to convince Herod and his sympathizers that in the work of Jesus there was a disturbing political menace. Such a conclusion finds some substantiation in Mark 3:6, where it is stated that the Pharisees plotted with the Herodians in order to destroy Jesus.

There is much evidence in the synoptic gospels to bear out the contention that the opposition of the Herodians constituted a real menace for Jesus, and that it influenced his decision to withdraw from Galilee. The warning of the friendly (?) Pharisees,

"Get thee out, and go hence: for Herod would fain kill thee!"⁸⁷

which Luke puts at a later juncture (in Samaria, where the tetrarch had no authority), probably belongs to this period.

⁸⁶ Warschauer, HLC, 131.
⁸⁷ Luke 13:31.

In any case, the mere fact that the heartless ruler who had put John to death should be making inquiries about Jesus⁸⁸ was in itself a danger-signal.

The course which Jesus followed after his departure from Galilee would seem to indicate a desire to spend as little time as possible within Herod's dominion.

"Apparently only once, and possibly only for a few hours, did he return to Capernaum. His task from this time on was to perfect the training and the faith of the few who were loyal to him. In accomplishing this task, private conversation takes the place of public address. Deliberate choice, as well as necessity, led him to seek for this new work a quiet field beyond the authority of Herod Antipas where the leaven of the Pharisees could not permeate. This place of temporary refuge was found among the lofty hills of upper Galilee, in closest touch with the land and people whom Jesus loved, but out of reach of his foes."⁸⁹

When they were passing again through Galilee Mark says that

"... he would not that any man should know it, for he taught his disciples, and said unto them, 'The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him.'"⁹⁰

D. Jesus' Devotion to His Nation.

The period between the final departure from Galilee and the final appearance in Jerusalem forms, in a very real sense, an interlude in the life of Jesus. It was essentially a period of planning and preparation. It is difficult to follow the movements of Jesus and his disciples during this period, for

⁸⁸ Luke 9:9.

⁸⁹ Kent, LTJ, 227.

⁹⁰ Mark 9:30,31; cf. Matt. 17:22,23; Luke 9:43-45.

the gospels themselves are not in agreement, but Rall points out that the period has four important characteristics:

"(1) It is a time of wandering, most of it outside of Galilee, some beyond the borders of Israel. (2) In this time Jesus turns from the masses to give his special attention to the training of a smaller circle of disciples. (3) He wins the confession of that circle, and declares definitely his Messiahship. (4) He sees suffering and death as his end and prepares his disciples for it."⁹¹

Though Jesus and his disciples appear to have travelled extensively during this period, there is reason to accept Luke's view that throughout the journey, at least from the time of the transfiguration onward, Jerusalem was the goal. Farrar says that in this section of Luke

"... the few identifications of time and place all point to one slow and solemn progress from Galilee to Jerusalem. (9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 10:38)"⁹²

It would be quite in harmony with the text of the synoptic gospels to suppose that Jesus had planned to go to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, and that in the meantime he planned his movements so as to avoid arrest.

Luke says, simply,

"... and it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."⁹³

Then he fills ten chapters with an extended narrative of the journey.⁹⁴ Denny says that Luke

⁹¹ Rall, LJ, 95.

⁹² Farrar, LC, 401.

⁹³ Luke 9:51.

⁹⁴ Luke 9:51—19:28.

"... sees in this journey a deep spiritual significance, and narrates it as though it were a sort of 'parable in action' of what it means to be a 'follower' of Jesus."⁹⁵

While it seems evident that much of this material is presented by Luke alone, and probably belongs to an earlier period of Jesus' ministry, there is no reason to doubt that in making this final journey Jesus had set Jerusalem as his final destination. Not merely the direction of his movements, but the whole tone of his teaching during this later period pointed to the approaching climax in the nation's capital.

Consideration of the change in popular feeling, the opposition of the Jewish religious leaders and the threat of seizure by the state authorities will help us to understand why it became necessary for Jesus to leave Galilee, but these factors in themselves do not indicate why he should choose to go to Jerusalem. There is, however, another factor, strongly emphasized in all of the gospels, which gives us a valuable clue to the understanding of this momentous decision. It is the fact of Jesus' passionate devotion to his nation.

Christians have commonly interpreted the message of Jesus in universal terms, i. e., as a broad philosophy of life equally valid for Jew and Gentile. While it is undoubtedly true that the principles of his religion are universally applicable, it is necessary, both for the sake of accuracy and

⁹⁵ Denny, CSJ, 230.

for the understanding of Jesus, to recognize the fact that Jesus clearly conceived of his message as having a special relation to his own people and to what he believed to be their unique mission in the world.

"When he came into Galilee and began to preach his message of repentance, he was conscious of a mission to his own nation. His preaching and his activities were all directed toward the saving of his nation from impending disaster. To be sure, the particular ideas he urged his nation to accept, the attitudes that he sought to bring about in the national life, are exactly those ideas and attitudes which are the very heart of true religion, for all individuals and for all races. But these universal ideas and attitudes were not presented by him in the first instance as an abstract philosophy of universal religion. They were presented in the form of an appeal to his fellow-Jews, as a practical patriotic program of religious reform. It was Jesus' hope that enough individual Jews of Palestine would accept it to change the national attitude toward Rome and thus at once save the nation from threatened destruction and at the same time thrust the saved nation forward into its real mission in the world."⁹⁵

Jesus' program for his nation had two aspects. The immediate objective was to lead the Jews themselves into a re-discovery of God and His universal Fatherly love. Hence the need for repentance (literally, "change your mind"⁹⁶) and for the spirit of love rather than of vengeance.⁹⁷ The larger objective was that through such a discovery the nation might be led to the fulfilment of its God-given mission as the Savior of the world. His whole program rested upon his own intimate personal experience of God and his profound conviction

⁹⁵ Denny, CSJ, 89 f.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁹⁷ Matt. 5:3-24; 38-48.

tion that God had prepared Israel in a unique way to reveal His nature and His will to the rest of the world. The aim of his ministry, therefore, was to win his countrymen to a program of repentance and dedication to the way of universal love which most adequately expressed the true nature of God. When the people and the religious leaders alike, blinded by their own narrow concepts and shallow formalism, failed to understand his message and rejected him, he was deeply grieved.⁹⁸

" . . . even a superficial glance at Jesus' life shows . . . how concretely Jesus' life was bound up with the political destiny of Judea. . . . Multitudes followed Jesus. Shall we assume that his message was in no wise related to the paramount interest of the people? What did Jesus mean when he reiterated that he was sent to save the lost sheep of Israel? What did his followers have in mind when they perceived in him their Savior, their Messiah, their Christ? What was Messiah's function, what did the people of the time expect from their Messiah? They expected their national salvation. What national salvation meant was clear enough. Luke states it: 'That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.' (Luke 1:71) He repeats it a few verses later: 'That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear.' (Luke 1:74)"⁹⁹

Salvation Jesus had brought, but his people would not accept it. His whole program ran counter to the apocalyptic dreams and materialistic ambitions with which they fed their minds from morning to night. His solution to the national problem required both a changed mind and a changed heart. It demanded spiritual dedication, service and sacrifice.¹⁰⁰ Yet

⁹⁸ Matt. 23:37; Luke 10:13-16; 13:34,35.

⁹⁹ Simkhovitch, TUV, 37.

¹⁰⁰ Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24,25; 19:21; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-26; 14:26-33.

it was only in this way that God's rule could come. Indeed, the Kingdom was a present fact to those who would open their eyes to see it and surrender their wills to its acceptance.¹⁰¹ Because much had been given to Israel, much would be expected from her.¹⁰² Jesus' program was not a rejection of the religious heritage of his nation, but its logical fulfilment.¹⁰³

Yet the nation would not accept his program. First Judea and now Galilee had rejected him. Four possible courses of action presented themselves.¹⁰⁴ One was to give up his mission entirely. This he could not do. If there was anything that he was sure of, it was that God had sent him into the world to reveal His will and His program, first to Israel, and through Israel to the rest of the world. Jesus would not act contrary to his Father's will, however much it might cost him to be loyal.¹⁰⁵

A second alternative was to go to the Gentiles. A reference in the fourth gospel suggests that the Greeks would have welcomed him.¹⁰⁶ In rejecting this possible course of action Jesus demonstrates quite clearly his deep loyalty to his own nation. He was convinced that his own people had a divine destiny which they had not yet fulfilled, and he probably realized, too, that, with all their mistakes, they were better prepared

¹⁰¹ Matt. 5:3-12; 7:21; Luke 17:20,21.

¹⁰² Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 8:16-18.

¹⁰³ Matt. 5:17,18; 7:12.

¹⁰⁴ These will be discussed more fully in Chapter IV.

¹⁰⁵ Matt. 4:10; 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 4:18; 22:42.

¹⁰⁶ John 12:20 f.

to receive his message than any other group.

"If Israel refused, what encouragement was there to go to their Gentile neighbors, whose religion was a mass of superstition, whose lives were on the lowest plane?"¹⁰⁷

He felt that he must win his own people first, yet it was quite clear that a continuation of his public work in either Galilee or Judea was likely to lead only to further misunderstanding and perhaps even death itself before he had made adequate preparation for the continuation of his work.

Two possible lines of action remained, and these he combined in a twofold plan. One was to train a small group of disciples to carry on his work; they would be the leaven that would "leaven the whole lump."¹⁰⁸ The other was to make a final appeal to the people as a whole by going to Jerusalem itself at the time of the Passover. The opposition was strong, and to carry out such a plan would be both difficult and dangerous. Still, it was possible that a stirring appeal in the temple might yet be heard by the authorities, or that enough followers might be rallied to insure a fair hearing for his message. That he was fully aware of the fact that such a daring plan might well cost him his life is indicated by his frequent predictions of his suffering and death, and by his persistent efforts to explain to his disciples the true nature of

¹⁰⁷ Rall, LJ, 97.

¹⁰⁸ Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:21.

his Messiahship.¹⁰⁹

After carefully weighing all of the possibilities, then, and after a period of retirement in which every effort was made to prepare the disciples for the calamity which threatened, Jesus made his plans to attend the Passover, and "stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Matt. 16:21-28; Mark 2:20; 8:31,32; 9:30-32; 10:32-34;
10:45; Luke 9:22-27.

¹¹⁰ Luke 9:51.

CHAPTER III. THE VIEWS OF OTHER WRITERS

Thus far we have considered the factors in the Galilean crisis which most probably affected Jesus' decision to go to Jerusalem—the change in popular feeling and the failure of the people to understand the true nature of his message, the growing hostility of the scribes and Pharisees, the increasing threat of seizure by the secular authorities, and, above all, his passionate desire to lead Israel into a true realization of her divine mission at whatever personal cost to himself. We have indicated, too, the reasons for regarding this decision as of utmost importance for the understanding of Jesus and his message.

Any study of this sort will inevitably contain strong elements of interpretation. No one can claim to approach such a task with absolute objectivity. Further, there are so many "gaps" in the scriptural records and there are so many elements of disagreement in the gospels themselves that we must interpret and imagine in order to understand. Many diligent scholars would heartily disagree with what we have already presented in the preceding chapter as factors affecting the decision to go to Jerusalem. Yet from our point of view this analysis is justified after a careful study of the most reliable documents that have come down to us.

The only way in which such a study as this can lay any claim to objectivity is to present, as accurately and fairly

as possible, divergent interpretations of the factors affecting the decision to go to Jerusalem as these interpretations appear in the writings of representative scholars. To present such interpretations, in summary fashion, will be our purpose in this chapter.

A. Denial of the Problem.

First of all, it must be admitted that some scholars, particularly those of an earlier age, would deny the problem altogether. They would hold that there was no real crisis and no real struggle in the mind of Jesus about whether or not he should go to Jerusalem, because this decision, like all of the other events of his life, had been planned from the beginning by his Heavenly Father, and he knew intuitively what God expected him to do.

In many instances such an interpretation finds its roots in the efforts to unite the supra-mundane Christ of primitive Christian theology (who did not appear as he had been expected) with the historical Jesus of Nazareth, in order to have

". . . a single personality at once historical and raised above time."¹¹¹

This attempt was made both by Gnosticism and by Logos Christianity. Indeed such a combination of history and doctrine appears in the fourth gospel, where it is clearly suggested that Jesus' actions were the result merely of direct and con-

¹¹¹ Schweitzer, QHJ, 3.

stant guidance from his Heavenly Father, in accordance with a definite and prearranged plan. Among the many passages which might be quoted in illustration, the following are typical:

"Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' . . . But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."112

"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that he doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.'"113

"For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him."114

"Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."115

"The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."116

"Then said Jesus unto them, 'When ye have lifted the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.'"117

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father . . ."118

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- 112 John 2:19-22.
 - 113 John 5:19,20.
 - 114 John 6:64.
 - 115 John 7:30.
 - 116 John 13:38.
 - 117 John 8:28,29.
 - 118 John 13:1.

It appears, then, that all scholars who are inclined to give considerable historical weight to the fourth gospel, and certainly all who would strive for a "literal" interpretation of scripture, would be likely, on the basis of the passages just quoted and other similar passages, to accept the view that Jesus had foreknowledge of the events of his life, and that there was never any serious doubt in his own mind as to what his course of action should be.

There are many arguments against such a point of view, and it is rarely held among reputable scholars. We have already indicated¹¹⁹ that the fourth gospel was obviously written from a doctrinal rather than from an historical viewpoint. Although this gospel undoubtedly has some historical value, its writer was obviously strongly under the influence of Greek philosophy, and it might more accurately be called an interpretation of Jesus than a record of his life. Further objections to this point of view will be considered in the next section.

B. Affirmation of the Problem.

There are many indications within the synoptic gospels that Jesus faced a real crisis in Galilee which forced him to rethink the methods of his campaign, and which finally led to the decision to go to Jerusalem. There is wide agreement among students of the life of Christ—even among those who

¹¹⁹ p. 8.

have divergent interpretations on other matters—that Jesus had a real mental struggle in deciding upon his course of action after the withdrawal from Galilee, and that the decision was made only after long and serious thought and earnest prayer.

The gospels indicate four great scenes in the life of Jesus where he reached decisions that radically affected the course of his life. These are: (1) the call and baptism;¹²⁰ (2) the temptation in the wilderness;¹²¹ (3) the transfiguration (where he seems to have found a final confirmation of his decision to go to Jerusalem)¹²² and (4) Gethsemane.¹²³ Concerning these four great experiences, Rall says,

"In all four scenes Jesus is concerned with the same great question, what his work was and how he should carry it out. All of them involve conflict and decision. They are the inner explanation of his outer life. He moves before men calm, strong, victorious, but back of that kingly life lay the temptations and fierce conflicts through which the Son of Man passed for the sake of the sons of men."¹²⁴

Bernhard Weiss, writing in 1884, argues that even if God had in some manner acquainted Jesus in advance with the course his life was to take, it would only have been a hindrance to him, for

"... the knowledge and powers with which He was endowed were all needful for the attainment of the ends He had in view. It would only have paralyzed the moral power and joyful enthusiasm of His work, if Jesus had known from the first that in regard to the people it was all in vain,—that they

120 Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23.
 121 Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13.
 122 Matt. 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36.
 123 Matt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46.
 124 Rall, LJ, 107 f.

would finally reject and crucify Him: He had laboured with all His powers, however, to save His people; and although never deceived as to the difficulties of the task, He had left it to God to decide what success should be His, and what means He should take for continuing and completing His task. The reason for His not thinking of His death at an earlier period was not because He had formed a mistaken conception of the results of His labours, or thought that the future might turn out differently: He could not do so, for the accomplishment of His task was dependent upon the conduct of the people as well as upon the attitude they took up towards Him. The necessity of His death He learnt from the development of the historical circumstances, and this not because He had hitherto been blinded to it, but only because the development now brought it about."¹²⁵

Warschauer pictures Jesus in retirement at Bethsaida, reviewing a situation which various causes were rendering "anxious," and gradually formulating his own concept of the Messiahship. After presenting his own interpretation of what this concept was, Warschauer adds,

"It is not suggested that all this presented itself to Jesus in a flash, as a sudden revelation or intuition; it is far more likely that His views developed point by point, under the influence of the events themselves. In one sense, indeed, the thought of His own death as a necessary step in the march of those events could not but occur to Him as soon as He had identified Himself with the coming Messiah."¹²⁶

Kent, in discussing the Galilean crisis, says,

"In many ways this crisis in Jesus' work in Galilee was the greatest tragedy in his life. At the moment of apparent success he was compelled suddenly to give up his work and to flee for his life beyond the bounds of Galilee. . . . His departure at this time proves that he was no blind enthusiast who courted death, as some have inter-

¹²⁵ Weiss LC? III, 67.
¹²⁶ Warschauer, HLC, 151.

preted him, but that each of his acts was determined by a deliberate purpose. . . . Here he had hoped to found a perfect community. Jesus' words reveal the intensity of his desire to realize this ideal and his tragic sense of failure. . . . Deliberate choice, as well as necessity, led him to seek for this new work a quiet field beyond the authority of Herod Antipas where the leaven of the Pharisees would not permeate."¹²⁷

Quotations might be given from many other books to illustrate this common view that in dealing with the Galilean crisis and the question of whether or not to go to Jerusalem, Jesus was engaged in a real intellectual struggle, but the ones that have already been given are typical. Only the "scriptural literalists" and those who are more concerned with doctrines about the supernatural Christ than with the life of the historical Jesus take a dissenting point of view, and these are decidedly in the minority. The literalists who favor the Johannine interpretation have quite as much difficulty with the synoptics as those who defend the synoptic interpretation have with the fourth gospel. Neither view, of course, can be "proven," but reason and scholarship favor the more common view that there was a real problem which Jesus had to solve.

C. National and Religious Loyalty.

Several writers share the point of view that the determining factor in the decision to go to Jerusalem was probably nothing more than a matter of religious loyalty. Jesus was a loyal Jew. He would therefore naturally want to be in the cap-

¹²⁷ Kent, LTJ, 226 f.

ital at the time of the Passover. Whether he felt that the great climax of his ministry would come on this occasion or not, he determined to go in order to observe the greatest religious festival of his people.

Joseph Jacobs in his biography of Jesus, which purports to be written by a member of the Sanhedrin to a Greek friend, emphasizes the "Jewishness" of Jesus. He states that Jesus was so careful about the observance of the "larger matters" of the Law that

"... on the eve of the fourteenth of Nisan he came stealthily into the city of Jerusalem, and ate the Passover lamb concealed in an upper chamber of one of his friends in the city. It showeth how earnest this man was in following the larger precepts of the Law, though in smaller matters he seemed to neglect it. For by this time he must have known that he was no longer safe in Jerusalem; and indeed he proved this by his secret entry into it. Yet in order to fulfill the Law, which saith, 'The Passover lamb is to be eaten in Jerusalem,' he risked his own and his followers' lives. Yet was he careful of them; for, as thou shalt soon hear, as soon as he had gone through the meal prescribed by the Law, he escaped out of Jerusalem."¹²⁸

Jesus came to Jerusalem, Jacobs suggests, not with any expectation of triumph, even though the people were wild with hope.

"Men knew not what was to become of this movement in favor of him. Most of the lower orders were hoping for a rising against the Romans to be led by this Jesus. Shrewder ones among the Better thought that the man was about to initiate a change in the spiritual government of our people. Some thought he would depose the Sadducees, and place

¹²⁸ Jacobs, JAOSH, 171.

the Pharisees in their stead. Others feared that he would carry into practice the ideals of the Ebionim, and raise the Poor against the Rich. Others said, 'Why did he not enter by the gate of the Essenes, for he holdeth with them?' All knew that the coming Passover would be a trying time for Israel, owing to the presence of the man Jesus in Jerusalem, and the manifest favor in which he was held by the common folk."¹²⁹

But Jesus, according to Jacobs, did not come into the city with any expectation of fulfilling the wild hopes of the people.

"... when I looked upon the face of Jesus, there were no signs there of the coming triumph; he sat with his head bent forward, his eyes down-cast, and his face all sad. And a chill somehow came over me."¹³⁰

This view that Jesus came to Jerusalem primarily in order to observe the Passover is, as might be expected, commonly held among Jewish scholars. However, most of them carry the matter further and affirm that, while the Passover was the direct occasion of the visit, Jesus was fully aware of the odds against him, and he went in the hope, if not in the expectation, that the Messianic revelation would take place while he was there.¹³¹ The view that Jesus went to Jerusalem solely to observe the passover is very rarely held. Even those who stress the "Jewishness" of Jesus recognize that his reasons for going to Jerusalem differed in very important respects from those of his fellow travellers, who were going because of the religious festival.

¹²⁹ Jacobs, JAOSH, 130.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 128.

¹³¹ e. g., Klausner, JN, 300 f.

D. Apocalyptic Interpretations.

It is impossible to understand the life and teachings of Jesus without some knowledge of the religious convictions and aspirations of his people. The two dominant characteristics of the Jewish religion in the time of Jesus were the Law and the Messianic Hope. We have already indicated that Jesus' attitude toward the Law, seeking a spiritual rather than a literal interpretation of it, led him into serious conflicts with the religious authorities. We shall show later how a similar interpretation of the Messianic Hope was the principal factor in bringing him into disfavor with the people.

Harlow indicates the intimate connection between Jesus and the Messianic hopes of his people when he says:

"The story of Jesus of Nazareth is essentially the chronicle of a Messianic episode. It is a story of events that could not possibly have occurred under circumstances or in environment other than of that time and place, an environment which was dominated and completely saturated with the Messianic hope of his people. The announcement of John the Baptist, repeated by Jesus himself, that 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,' was a Messianic proclamation. The people who made up his followers and who surrounded him during his closing hours, whose faith persisted and provided the motive power in the formation of the ἐκκλησία which followed him, were dominated by the Messianic expectation. He was recognized by his immediate followers as the Messiah, he permitted them to continue this attitude toward him with his approval, and finally in that critical hour when his life hung in the balance, in the presence of all the authorities of his nation, he confidently proclaimed himself to be the Messiah. The charge against him before the Roman procurator was essentially that he claimed to be the Messianic king of the Jews, a charge which the ironic superscription on his cross repeated as the reason for his death. Those who remained his devoted followers, even in the face of his rejection by the

authorities of his people and his execution at their behest by the representatives of the great Empire against whom the Messianic hope was directed, did so in the conviction that he was the Messiah and that he would return in his own person and perform the Messianic functions."¹³²

What, then, was the Messianic Hope? To what degree did Jesus share in it? How did he interpret it? These questions are basic to an understanding of Jesus, and the answers which we give to them will radically affect our whole interpretation of, and attitude toward, both the man and his message.

In the earliest conceptions, the Messianic Hope took on the form of an earthly, political expectation. The Jews had long believed that they were the chosen people of Jehovah, and that Jehovah was the ruler of the whole earth. How, then, were they to explain their sufferings under foreign oppressors? The answer to this problem, indicated in the glowing descriptions and confident predictions in the Old Testament, was that in the very near future there would come a day when Jehovah would raise up a descendant of David who would possess the leadership ability and the military skill of his illustrious ancestor, and who would lead Israel to ultimate victory over her enemies and a place of independence and leadership among the nations. Such a hope is vividly expressed in the Psalter of Solomon:

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up to them their king, the son of David, in the time which thou, O God, knowest, that he may reign over Israel thy servant. . . . He shall destroy the ungodly na-

¹³² Harlow, JJE, vii.

tions with the word of his mouth. . . . And he shall gather together a holy people. . . . He shall judge the nations and the peoples with the wisdom of his righteousness. And he shall possess the nations of the heathen to serve him beneath his yoke. And he shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen by the whole earth; and he shall purge Jerusalem and make it holy even as it was in the days of old."¹³³

As the years passed, however, and the plight of Israel grew worse rather than better, it seemed impossible that the deliverance could be brought about by any other means than a miracle from heaven. Such an expectation is voiced in Daniel:

"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and destroy all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever."¹³⁴

Thus the expectation of a "Son-of-David Messiah" was gradually replaced in the popular mind by the expectation of a miraculous intervention of God in history which was to bring about the establishment of a "new age," in which there was to be a "general resurrection from the dead, the judgment of every individual, and the reward of heaven and hell."¹³⁵ This form of the Messianic Hope found expression in a new type of literature, commonly called apocalyptic, of which the Book of Daniel is the outstanding example in the Old Testament. In this apocalyptic literature the coming of the Messianic Age is depicted with elaborate and often fantastic imagery. Many of these pictures show God's wrath and government announced

¹³³ Psalter of Solomon 17:23. Cf., e. g., II Samuel 7:8-16;
 Isaiah 9:6,7; Psalm 89:3-37.

¹³⁴ Daniel 2:44.

¹³⁵ Rall, LJ, 28.

and administered by a Messiah. However, in the apocalyptic literature the Messiah is no longer a "Son of David," but a mysterious divine being sent by God to be His representative on earth. In the Book of Daniel, where the seer writes of the pagan kingdoms under the figure of beasts, and of the contemporary tyranny of Syria as the "great beast," there is a vision of the coming of the apocalyptic Messiah, to whom the title "Son of Man" is given:

"I beheld even till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed, and it was given to be burned with fire. And as for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."¹³⁶

A vivid description of the "Son of Man" is given in the Book of Enoch, written at a later date, in which the "Son" is chosen by God to exercise judgment:

"a being whose countenance had the appearance of a man, and his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels. And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was . . . And he answered and said unto me:

"This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,

"With whom dwelleth righteousness,

"And who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden,

"Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him,

"And whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness forever.

¹³⁶ Daniel 7:11-14.

"And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen
 "Shall raise up the kings and the mighty from
 their seats,
 "And shall loosen the reins of the strong,
 "And break the teeth of the sinners . . .
 "And the earth shall rejoice,
 "And the righteous shall dwell upon it,
 "And the elect shall walk thereon."¹³⁷

Not all of the prophecies of the kingdom that God was to establish and of the Messiah who was to bring it were nationalistic or militaristic. In certain of the Psalms (e. g., 24, 29, 47, and 95 to 100)¹³⁸ a third conception of the reign of God appears in which the earthly king and Messiah disappear altogether and it is Jehovah himself who shall rule justly and eternally over all nations and races. This conception is doubtless the outgrowth of the teaching of the prophets, who had denounced the narrow nationalistic hopes of their contemporaries. Amos had even gone so far as to declare that the day of Jehovah would be one of darkness rather than of light,¹³⁹ and the writer of the Book of Jonah had made a vigorous protest against the selfish national spirit. In the writing of the Second Isaiah the place of the Messianic King is taken by the "Suffering Servant,"¹⁴⁰ though no one prior to Jesus seems to have made any direct connection between the two ideas.

¹³⁷ Book of Enoch, quoted by Bowie, M, 64, after Charles.
¹³⁸ After Kent, LTJ, 160.
¹³⁹ Amos 5:18.
¹⁴⁰ Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

It is inconceivable that Jesus should have been indifferent to the passionate religious longings of his people. Indeed his frequent use of many of the terms intimately associated with the thought of the Coming Kingdom prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was profoundly influenced by the Messianic Hope and related ideas. Since these terms had many different meanings, there has always been a great deal of discussion as to the sense in which he used them. When Jesus permitted his followers to think of him as the Messiah, what kind of a Messiah did he think himself to be, and what kind of a kingdom did he proclaim? Our answer to this question will obviously determine our conception of the "self-consciousness" of Jesus and strongly influence our answer to the question of this thesis.

There are some who would argue that Jesus was a "thoroughgoing apocalypticist." Strauss, in his Life of Jesus Critically Examined, clearly takes this position:

"Jesus, therefore, certainly expected to restore the throne of David, and, with His disciples, to rule over a people freed from political bondage, but in this expectation He did not set His hopes on the sword of human followers (Luke xxii. 38, Matt. xxvi. 52), but upon the legions of angels which His heavenly Father could give Him (Matt. xxvi. 53). When He speaks of the coming of His Messianic glory, it is with angels and heavenly powers that He surrounds Himself (Matt. xvi. 27, xxiv. 30 ff., xxv. 31). Before the majesty of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven the nations will submit without striking a blow, and at the sound of the angel's trumpet-blast will, with the dead who shall then arise, range themselves before Him and His disciples for judgment. All this Jesus did not purpose to bring about by any arbitrary action of

His own, but left it to His heavenly Father, who alone knew the right moment for this catastrophic change (Mark xiii. 32), to give Him the signal of its coming; and He did not waver in His faith even when death came upon Him before its realization. Anyone who shrinks from adopting this view of the Messianic background of Jesus' plans, because he fears by so doing to make Jesus a visionary enthusiast, must remember how exactly these hopes corresponded to the long-cherished Messianic expectation of the Jews; and how easily, on the super-naturalistic assumptions of the period and among a people which preserved so strict an isolation as the Jews, an ideal which was in itself fantastic, if it were the national ideal and had some true and good features, could take possession of the mind even of one who was not inclined to fanaticism."¹⁴¹

Strauss wrote in 1835. In a recent history of New Testament criticism McCown, who is inclined to accept the apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus, with some modifications, says,

"Strauss was wrong in his logic, his historical method and his philosophical foundation. . . . His criticism was philosophical rather than historical. His book, like the traditions he analyzed, was essentially a product and a revelation of the confused thinking of his times, as were the reactions against it."¹⁴²

It remained for Albert Schweitzer, writing in 1906, to contribute the classic interpretation of Jesus from the viewpoint of "thorough-going, apocalyptic, transcendent eschatology." Schweitzer argues that Jesus set out to preach the coming of a supernatural and miraculous kingdom of God, and that he urged men to repent and free themselves from sin in order to prepare for its coming.

". . . the coming of the Kingdom of God is not only symbolically or analogically, but also really and temporally connected with the harvest. The harvest ripening upon earth is the last! With it comes also the Kingdom of God which brings in the new age.

¹⁴¹ Quoted by Schweitzer, QHJ, 93.

¹⁴² McCown, SRJ, 17, 3.

When the reapers are sent into the fields, the Lord in Heaven will cause His harvest to be reaped by the holy angels."¹⁴³

Jesus' expectation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom was based upon the "host of penitents" which the movement begun by the preaching of John and continued by himself was winning for it, thus "wringing it from God."¹⁴⁴

"The secret of the Kingdom of God which Jesus unveils in the parables about confident expectation in Mark iv., and declares in so many words in the eulogy on the Baptist (Matt. xi.), amounts to this, that in the movement to which the Baptist gave the first impulse, and which still continued, there was an initial fact which was drawing after it the coming of the Kingdom, in a fashion which was miraculous, unintelligible, but unfailingly certain, since the sufficient cause for it lay in the power and purpose of God."¹⁴⁵

Therefore Jesus, believing that the Kingdom is to come at harvest time, sends out his disciples to make the fact known to Israel.

"He tells them in plain words (Matt. x. 23), that He does not expect to see them back in the present age. The Parousia of the Son of Man, which is logically and temporally identical with the dawn of the Kingdom, will take place before they shall have completed a hasty journey through the cities of Israel to announce it."¹⁴⁶

The prediction was not fulfilled. The disciples returned and the Son of Man had not yet appeared.

"The actual history disavowed the dogmatic history on which the action of Jesus had been based. An event of supernatural history which must take place, and must take place at that

¹⁴³ Schweitzer, *QMJ*, 355.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 356.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 356.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 357.

particular point in time, failed to come about; that was for Jesus, who lived wholly in the dogmatic history, the first 'historical' occurrence, the central event which closed the former period of His activity and gave the coming period a new character."¹⁴⁷

It is, then, correct to say that there were two distinct periods in the life of Jesus. During the first period he was surrounded by people, and during the second period he travels about with the twelve only. This fact, however, is not to be explained by any theory of growing opposition and waning support.

"Since in Galilee it is impossible for Him to be alone, and He absolutely must be alone, He 'slips away' to the north. Once more modern theology was right: He really does flee; not, however, from hostile Scribes, but from the people, who dog His footsteps in order to await in His company the appearing of the Kingdom of God and of the Son of Man—to await it in vain."¹⁴⁸

"In leaving Galilee He abandoned the hope that the final tribulation would begin of itself. If it delays, that means that there is still something to be done, and yet another of the violent must lay violent hands upon the Kingdom of God. The movement of repentance had not been sufficient. When, in accordance with His commission, by sending forth the disciples with their message, he hurled the fire-brand which should kindle the fiery trials of the Last Time, the flame went out. He had not succeeded in sending the sword on earth and stirring up the conflict. And until the time of trial had come, the coming of the Kingdom and His own manifestation as Son of Man were impossible."¹⁴⁹

The failure to bring about the coming of the Kingdom through the mission of the twelve still did not mean that the Kingdom was not near at hand. On the contrary, the time of

¹⁴⁷ Schweitzer, QHJ, 357.
¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 362.
¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 387.

trial was near at hand, but there were conditions yet to be fulfilled. Gradually the realization came to Jesus that the *πειρασμός* had been eliminated from the series of eschatological events, but only that it might be accomplished in his own person.

"As He who was to rule over the members of the Kingdom in the future age, He was appointed to serve them in the present, to give His life for them, the many (Mark x. 45 and xiv. 24), and to make in His own blood the atonement which they would have had to render in the tribulation. The Kingdom could not come until the debt which weighed upon the world was discharged. Until then, not only the now living believers, but the chosen of all generations since the beginning of the world await their manifestation in glory—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the countless unknown who should come from the East and from the West to sit at tables with them at the Messianic feast (Matt. viii. 11). The enigmatic *πολλοί* for whom Jesus dies are those predestined to the Kingdom, since His death must at last compel the Coming of the Kingdom."¹⁵⁰

In the "Suffering Servant" passages of Isaiah Jesus discovers that it will be necessary for him to suffer, and that his suffering must remain a mystery. Therefore it becomes clear to him that, before the Kingdom can come, he must go to Jerusalem and fulfill prophecy by taking upon himself the last Messianic woes. His course of action is an "imperious forcing of eschatology into history." His condemnation and execution, which are about to take place, are now identified with the predicted pre-Messianic tribulations.

"Towards Passover, therefore, Jesus sets out for Jerusalem, solely in order to die there. . . . From the revelation at Caesarea Philippi onward, all that belongs to the history of Jesus, in the strict sense, are the events which lead up to His death;

¹⁵¹ Schweitzer, QHJ, 387.

or, to put it more accurately, the events in which He Himself is the sole actor. The other things which happen, the questions which are laid before Him for decision, the episodic incidents which occur in those days, have nothing to do with the real 'Life of Jesus,' since they contribute nothing to the decisive issue, but merely form the anecdotic fringes of the real outward and inward event, the deliberate bringing down of death upon Himself."¹⁵²

According to Schweitzer, Jesus was arrested and condemned on account of his Messianic claims, yet he had never been held by the multitude to be the Messiah. The secret of the Messiahship he had successfully kept until the time of the transfiguration, when the three disciples who were with him learned of it. Peter's confession came after the transfiguration, rather than before, and discloses the Messianic secret to the rest of the twelve. It was this secret which Judas revealed to the Jewish authorities in order to give them a legal basis for Jesus' arrest, conviction and execution.

"Jesus died because two of His disciples had broken His command of silence: Peter when he made known the secret of the Messiahship to the Twelve at Caesarea Philippi; Judas Iscariot by communicating it to the High Priest. But the difficulty was that Judas was the sole witness. Therefore the betrayal was useless so far as the actual trial was concerned unless Jesus admitted the charge. So they first tried to secure His condemnation on other grounds, and only when these attempts broke down did the High Priest put, in the form of a question, the charge in support of which he could have brought no witnesses. But Jesus immediately admitted it, and strengthened the admission by an allusion to His Parousia in the near future as Son of Man. The betrayal and the trial can only be rightly understood when it is realized that the public knew nothing whatever of the secret of the Messiahship."¹⁵³

¹⁵² Schweitzer, QHJ, 389.
¹⁵³ Ibid., 394 f.

In substantial agreement with Schweitzer's view is that of his disciple, Warschauer:

"In the quiet and security of Bethsaida, Jesus found time and leisure for reviewing a situation which various causes . . . were contributing to render an anxious one. The summer had come, the harvest was ended, but the Kingdom, so confidently predicted as at hand, still lingered. It would seem that some condition had yet to be fulfilled, some forcible step to be taken, in order to bring in the deferred consummation. It was probably in these days of retirement on the eastern side of Jordan that the Lord finally formulated in His own mind the rôle that was to be His in the great drama of Redemption; it was at this juncture, i. e., that He made that application of the current conception of the messianic birth-pangs to His own Person, which meant that He Himself must pass through suffering and death ere He could reappear as the Messiah and usher in the Kingdom."¹⁵⁴

If we are to accept the point of view set forth by Schweitzer and Warschauer, then the answer to the question of our thesis is, "Jesus made his final journey to Jerusalem in order to die, and he wanted to die in order to satisfy 'the debt which weighed upon the world,' thus forcing God to hasten the time of the Divine Intervention and the establishment of the Kingdom over which he is to rule as the supernatural Son of Man."

The criticisms of this point of view are many. It is to be criticized chiefly because (1) it is based upon a conception of history which is essentially false and which, if accepted, makes the study of history almost wasted effort; (2) it is based upon a conception of Christ which practically ignores the most salient points in his teaching; (3) it robs the gos-

¹⁵⁴ Warschauer, HLC, 151.

pel of all relevance to contemporary living by removing the sanction of its ethical and spiritual norms.

The weakness of Schweitzer's attitude toward history has been admirably summarized by McCown:

"His semi-Hegelian conception of the historical process is entirely wrong. Ideas do not always annul themselves when they are consistently carried through. Progress toward truth is not made by the conflict between two (often confusedly opposed) alternatives, such as supernatural or rational, mythical or historical, eschatological or noneschatological. His whole argument is based upon the "either-or fallacy," the "fallacy of antithesis," or "abstraction," or "misplaced concreteness." His own theory may be demolished by the same specious, illogical arguments by which he disproves others.

"Schweitzer's knowledge of the facts is as inaccurate as his logic. The ignorance which the eighteenth-century rationalists exhibit regarding psychology and the history of religions, Strauss's defective conceptions of myth-making, the naive modernity of the 'liberal' picture of Jesus—all find an admirable parallel in Schweitzer's idea that first-century Jewish eschatology was thoroughly transcendent."¹⁵⁵

Schweitzer seems to the present writer to reflect an almost complete misunderstanding of the "self-consciousness" and the message of Jesus. He ignores Jesus' central emphasis upon the inwardness of true religion; he completely disregards what seems to be an obvious fact, that Jesus' conception of God as a loving Father was quite different from the conception of the apocalyptists; he robs the religion of Jesus of its very "back-bone"—its ethical demands and spiritual ideals.

Jesus was undoubtedly influenced by the apocalyptic ex-

¹⁵⁵ McCown, SRJ, 252.

pectations of his own age, but this does not mean in any sense that he fully accepted any of the established theories at their face value. Indeed, as we have already indicated, the fact of his rejection by the people is largely attributable to his rejection of the role which these theories demanded that the Messiah should assume. Further criticism of this point of view will appear in Chapter IV.

E. A Revolutionary Campaign.

As there are some who would have Jesus assume the role of the apocalyptic "Son of Man," so also are there some who would make of him a "Son-of-David Messiah." They would make of his ministry a vigorous campaign for social reform, and indeed there is a vast amount of material in the gospel records, particularly in Luke, which seems to substantiate such a view.

In 1778, Hermann Samuel Reimarus set forth the highly imaginative theory

"... that Jesus was covertly a revolutionary whose secret was revealed by his violent cleansing of the Temple, and that this led to his arrest and execution, and that the church was founded on a resurrection fraudulently simulated by the disciples."¹⁵⁶

Although his theory never won acceptance, it was one of the earliest attempts to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus, and was the source of inspiration for many later attempts to discover what relationships, if any, existed between Jesus and the social and political movements of his own

¹⁵⁶ McCown, SRJ, 241. Cf. Schweitzer, QHJ, Chapter 2.

day. In our own generation many attempts have been made to interpret the life of Jesus from the "social" point of view, though none of them have taken a position so extreme as that of Reimarus.

One of the more popular "radical" interpretations is that given by the English Socialist, Conrad Noel. He argues that Jesus lived in a time not unlike our own in the sense that imperialistic Roman capitalism controlled the world. Both the Romans and the Jews had seen the triumph of greed and self-seeking, in church and state. The leaders of Israel, the chosen people of God who had been called to establish a divine commonwealth upon earth, had denied their calling and found common cause with the Roman tyrants. Into this world, corrupted and impoverished by imperialism and plutocracy, came Jesus of Nazareth, aflame with the fire of rebellion. He came into the world, not as a pietist in despair of this world, nor merely as a social reformer, but as a radical revolutionist. The theme of his message was "the coming commonwealth."

"Before the new world could be brought into being he was convinced that someone must emerge who would aim at an entire change in the national outlook; the axe must be laid to the root of the tree; an attack on the avarice and pride and those other lusts which were ruining private and public life must at all costs be made."¹⁵⁷

"In going into the Jordan and allowing the Baptist to pour over him the waters, he allied himself with the justice, the comradeship, the courage,

¹⁵⁷ Noel, LJ, 253.

the purity of the prophets and martyrs of the past, fulfilled and consummated in this last voice crying in the wilderness. The new world was to go deeper and wider than this. It was to be so far deeper and higher and broader than the conception of the Baptist that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven would be greater than John, and yet without this daring and profound preparation, the new world would have been inconceivable. The eternal foundations had once more, and more thoroughly than ever before, been laid bare."¹⁵⁸

The aim of his ministry is to proclaim the ideal social order and to win people to its acceptance. After a campaign to win followers in Galilee is brought to a close by the danger of seizure by Herod, he retreats, like a wise general, and continues his efforts elsewhere. While he is working in Perea, an urgent message comes from Martha and Mary requesting him to come to Bethany, where Lazarus is ill. Jesus hesitates.

"Was this hesitation due to the conflict in his mind between the appeal of the desperate need of the individual, and the claims of the world plan and of the strategy that was necessary to preserve it? Although there was a certain danger from Herod, he was gaining adherents daily in Perea, who, going up to Jerusalem with him would later constitute a valuable bodyguard for his defense. The disciples understood the immediate danger of crossing into Judea where the authorities had but recently attempted to kill their Master. In spite of the danger Jesus determines to go. The disciples decide to go with him, although such an adventure seems to them to involve certain death."¹⁵⁹

Jesus is forced to hide for a time in Ephraim, but soon resumes his work in Perea.

¹⁵⁸ Noel, LJ, 269.
¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 413.

"He is still determined to make Jerusalem his objective, and to reach the capital with the mass of pilgrims who will be marching to the coming Passover. It is of the utmost importance that he should carry on an intensive propaganda in Perea so that as many as possible of the Galileans and Pereans shall have heard his message and been converted before they accompany him to the feast."¹⁶⁰

"Jesus has considerable success in his preaching of the kingdom, and great crowds of the common people follow him journeying to Jerusalem; but he warns them that if they identify themselves with him they will be marching to almost certain death. Many a time he has given them this warning, but it can never be too often repeated. He now puts it in stronger terms than ever before; unless they are prepared to forsake their families and all that they have they cannot be his disciples."¹⁶¹

For Noel, the fatal journey to Jerusalem is a bold attempt to inaugurate a New Social Order by an appearance in the capital at a critical time with a following large enough to support him in an effort to establish a government based upon justice and comradeship.

Victor Harlow offers a similar interpretation of the final journey to Jerusalem, though he attributes to Jesus some of the apocalyptic expectations of his day.

"The story as told in the gospels discloses with marked clearness the fact that Jesus did assume, in at least some degree, those characteristics of the Messiah essential in the current expectation. It is reasonably clear that he did assemble a great number of followers, and that his relation to them was recognized to be that of a leadership closely approximating military authority; that he led this multitude to Jerusalem and at their head entered the City in Messianic manner; that in Jerusalem itself he attempted

¹⁶⁰ Noel, LJ, 417.
¹⁶¹ Ibid., 419.

to exercise supreme authority, and was for a day actually in physical control of the Temple from which he had displaced the usual authorities, and that he clearly claimed to be the King of the Jews; and that he was convicted and put to death as an insurrectionist, a false claimant of authority."¹⁶²

"Jesus' conviction of his messiahship, originated at his baptism at the fords of the Jordan and, carried through his Galilean ministry, but somewhat disturbed by his compulsory flight from Galilee to avoid arrest by Herod, was confirmed anew by the recognition of that messiahship by Peter and the undoubted adherence of the remainder of the Twelve to that announcement. With this confirmed conviction, he determined openly to assume the responsibility attached to it, to abandon his wanderings in foreign lands and to return to the capital of Judaism, the only place where his messiahship could be fulfilled according to the prophecies, there to give his nation an opportunity to recognize him as the Anointed One of God and, consequently, as the nation's head. He recognized the hazard involved in presenting this assumption in a city where a national government almost certain to be hostile to such an attempt was already in operation, and foresaw the probability of personal disaster and a fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the suffering Messiah, but he felt assured that in such event he would be able to fulfill the prophecies of the resurrection and would return upon the clouds of Heaven, as was required by the current conception of the Messianic coming. In addition there were numerous prophecies concerning the circumstances surrounding the coming of the Messiah which must necessarily be fulfilled before the old age could end and the new age be ushered in, and which could be fulfilled only at Jerusalem. These he must fulfill in order that the will of God be done and the Kingdom of God appear on earth, and for this reason he must at any cost to himself go to Jerusalem."¹⁶³

This view, expressed by both Noel and Harlow, that Jesus marched to Jerusalem with a more or less organized following of considerable strength and with the definite expectation of taking over control of the government of his nation as the

¹⁶² Harlow, JJE, ix.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 4 f.

long-expected Messiah, is open to a number of serious objections. It simply is not in harmony with the gospel records. While it is true that Jesus was unquestionably a man who was sensitive to the social problems of his day, his method of dealing with those problems had nothing to do with "mass movements" of any sort, and only in a wild flight of the imagination could one possibly conceive of Jesus as an armed revolutionist! We have already indicated reasons for believing that Jesus definitely rejected all opportunities to become the leader of a popular movement, and that he did so because the political and religious ideas which would lead men to join such a movement were not in harmony with his own. There is no adequate scriptural basis for any statement that during that last Passover week in Jerusalem Jesus deliberately attempted to seize control of the government, or even of the Temple.

This answer to our question we must also reject, not only because it is uncorroborated by the scriptural account of Jesus' life, but also because it is entirely out of harmony with the spirit of his teachings.

F. A Spiritual Program.

Thus far in the present chapter we have attempted to refute those who would deny that Jesus faced any real problem in arriving at the decision to make the final journey to Jerusalem, and we have considered several possible reasons for making the journey. All of these explanations we have re-

jected in whole or in part. We turn now to another possible solution to the problem of our thesis, and one with which we are inclined to agree. A fuller development of this solution, from the writer's own point of view, will be made in our concluding chapter. For the present, it will serve our purpose to indicate how the clues to this solution have been found in the work of other writers.

No human life is simple. Not one isolated idea or incident, but a whole multitude of factors, conscious and subconscious, affect even the incidental decisions we make in the daily round. Each of us lives in not one, but many, worlds. There is the world of the home, the world of the office, the world of the schoolroom, the world of the state, and so on. Each of us affects, and is in turn affected by, the events which take place in each of these worlds, and so what may appear to be a very simple life on the surface is, in reality, very complex.

This very common observation offers a valuable clue to our quest. We must beware of any and all "only" answers. We may at least feel confident that Jesus was guided in making his decision, not by one consideration, but by many. He did not live in a vacuum. He could not have been unaware of the sufferings and longings of his people. "Law," "Pharisee," "Herodian," "Kingdom," "Messiah," "Rome"—these were not merely terms that he found in a book, but were living, ever present realities to him. Further, he was not the provincial,

isolated peasant that some biographers picture him to have been. In those days Palestine was one of the most cosmopolitan regions in all the Empire, a connecting link between the East and the West.

"A quarter-century of continuous contact night and day with that unceasing procession of all the peoples of the Mediterranean world that passed through his land makes it impossible to look upon him as many modern critics have done as one whose narrow horizon and limited life debar him from any word large enough for our vast and complex world. On the contrary his gospel could not be a petty or insular message; it must needs include all mankind within the scope of its thought."¹⁶⁴

These considerations will help us to see that many forces played upon Jesus, influencing the course of his life and the development of his thought. The rich religious heritage of his race, the sufferings of his people, the selfishness and narrowness of the political leaders, the shallow formalism and spiritual blindness of many of the religious leaders—all these and many other factors were strands woven into the fabric of his thought. But what was the pattern that gradually took shape as the weaving process went on? What was the dominating motif, the "master idea?" By what supreme standard of value did he pass judgment on men and events? What was his major interest and concern as he charted the course of his life? All of these are important considerations if we would thoughtfully arrive at a reasonable solution to the problem of our thesis.

¹⁶⁴ Booth, GGR, 7.

Some (e. g., Schweitzer) have pictured Jesus as under the dominating influence of the apocalyptic ideas of his day. Others (e. g., Noel, Harlow) have held that he was dominated by the idea of the "Son-of-David" Messiah who was to rule in a political sense, administering justice to all in accordance with God's will. Still others (e. g. Joseph Jacobs) have pictured him as merely another in the long line of Jewish prophets.

Once one has rejected the answers which these interpretations would give to the question of our thesis, what other answers remain?

The position taken by an increasingly large number of scholars in recent times is that the gospel of Jesus is predominantly a spiritual program. The dominant desire of his life was not that he might fulfill the apocalyptic expectations, or that he might inaugurate an era of justice and good-will by ruling from the throne of David, or even that he might overthrow entrenched evil and secure political and economic justice by organizing a mass movement. Indeed these were the very temptations which had beset him during that trying period in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry.¹⁶⁵ The one aim of his life was to do the will of God, as that will was revealed to him, in whatever manner and at whatever cost God might determine.

¹⁶⁵ See Bowie, M, 70-92; Rall, LJ, 51-56; Denny, CSJ, 89-100; Kent, LTJ, 62-69; Bosworth, LTJ, 70-80, etc.

"Here at the beginning he decides what his work is to be and how it shall be done. (1) He will gain his followers not by doing wonders, but by the quiet work of teaching that shall win men's hearts and minds. To that end we see him sometimes refusing to work miracles, again bidding men be silent about his deeds of healing, and himself making no public declaration of his Messiahship until toward the end of his life. (2) He will not seek for any external power. He does not ask for any of the kingdoms of the world, and he will make no compromise to gain the support of those who are in positions of power. (3) He will avoid no danger for himself that comes in the way of his work, and he will use no power to save himself. His one concern will be to do his Father's will; what comes of this he will leave with his Father."¹⁶⁶

"During these days in the wilderness Jesus passed through a profound religious experience which may well have deepened the lines in his face and set a great purpose more firmly in his soul. The things that became clear were that he was resolved at any cost to obey God, that his primary purpose would be to bring men into fellowship with God so that they should always be listening to his voice, that he could make no startling announcement of Messianic mission or even be sure that his mission was Messianic, and that he would make no compromise with any form of evil, however expedient it might seem to be to do so. Important questions regarding his future remained unanswered. He had yet to feel his way along as God should open the path before him."¹⁶⁷

Once one accepts this point of view—that the dominant desire of Jesus' life was to bring men, through a change of mind and heart, into a fellowship with God which would bring both thought and action into harmony with the divine will and thus bring about God's reign upon earth—what answer are we to give to the question of our thesis? If Jesus did not expect an apocalyptic intervention or a political or military revolu-

¹⁶⁶ Rall, LJ, 55.

¹⁶⁷ Bosworth, LTJ, 79 f.

tion, what was his purpose in making that final journey to Jerusalem in the face of the overwhelming opposition which he knew might be expected there?

"Why did Jesus determine to go? The first and principal reason was that he saw that it was the will of his Father. Through all these days he had been following the guidance of that Spirit that had been with him in boyhood and had filled him with a fuller baptism there at the Jordan. His one passion had been to do his Father's will, his one confidence had been his Father's care. He had entered the doors of service which his Father had opened. Now these were closed. In Galilee the multitudes who had once listened and rejoiced were turning away, while his enemies conspired. To go to Gentile lands would be in effect to give up his mission; it was one thing to help individual Gentiles here and there as he met them, but the Kingdom could not be built upon such foundations. The message must go to his own people first. But that meant not merely Galilee; one could more easily think of France apart from Paris than of the Jewish people of that day apart from Jerusalem. Here was the work for which he had come. As to what lay at the end of that road, that belonged to his Father. If Jerusalem meant suffering and death, then death was a part of his Father's will and purpose."¹⁶⁸

"Ever since the great crisis in Galilee, Jesus' face had been set toward Jerusalem. Apparently he was waiting before going thither, until he could be sure that the training of his disciples was reasonably complete. His choice of the Passover season was probably not an accident, but a result of his deliberate plan. At this, the greatest of the annual Jewish festivals, he could be sure that the crowds from Galilee, as well as the leaders of the people, would be assembled at Jerusalem. Then, if ever, he could appeal successfully to the better conscience of the nation. Whatever the outcome, it would be sure to make a deep impression upon his race."¹⁶⁹

An inner compulsion and outward circumstances, both judged in the light of his unique spiritual genius, gradually led

¹⁶⁸ Rall, LJ, 108 f.
¹⁶⁹ Kent, LTJ, 243.

Jesus to the conviction that the fulfilment of his divine mission required that he go to his nation's capital and there appeal to the spiritual sensitivity and moral conscience of his people, pleading for repentance (a change of mind and heart) and an acceptance of his program. His deep inner conviction that God had sent him into the world to lead men into a fellowship with Him and an acceptance of His will led him to see that in some sense, at least, his mission was Messianic, although not in the sense in which the people used that term. In the "Suffering Servant" passage of Isaiah he had discovered a deeper meaning of the Messiahship which combined the ideas of service and suffering.¹⁷⁰

"He had now fully accepted a mission in some sense Messianic. He was coming to his capital city. He was coming not on a war horse with armed men about him, but on the animal used in times of peace. Perhaps the Zechariah passage cited in the Matthew gospel may have been in Jesus' own mind:

'Tell ye the daughter of Zion
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,
Meek, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt the foal of an ass.' (Zech. 9:9)

He was a poor man's Messiah, riding on a borrowed animal, with poor people all about him. He came to his capital with only an inner equipment: his sense of the presence of God; his ideals of life and the certainty that it was under his leadership that God meant these ideals to be realized; and his readiness to suffer death for the accomplishment of this result."¹⁷¹

The journey to Jerusalem was undertaken in order to make a final desperate appeal for an acceptance of his program--

¹⁷⁰ Rall, LJ, 111.

¹⁷¹ Bosworth, LTJ, 298.

the kind of Kingdom which he felt God really wanted to establish. He realized that the odds were against him, but he felt that, even if the people should reject him and he should be seized by the authorities, it would still be possible for God, through his suffering and death, to reach the hearts and minds of men and thus bring about at last the establishment of His Kingdom.

Many will find objections to this point of view. They will say that it is an attempt to "thoroughly modernize" Jesus. To this we can only reply that this view is no more subjective than any other. There is at least as much substantiation for it in the scriptural accounts as there is for any of the other points of view that have already been presented, and to us it seems the most reasonable of them all. It is not only true to the spirit of Jesus as he is pictured in the earliest gospels, but it also lays hold upon the eternal and universal elements in his teaching. Such a view has weaknesses and evidences of "subjective interpretation," but so does any other.

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS

A. Steps Toward a Solution of the Problem.

The aim of our study, as stated in the opening chapter of this thesis, has been "to make a careful study of the factors which influenced Jesus in arriving at the decision to make his final journey to Jerusalem, that through such a study we may achieve an insight into the mind of Jesus and a better understanding of his teachings."¹⁷²

In the furtherance of this objective we first made an analytic study of the material in the synoptic gospels which seems to have a direct bearing upon our problem. Then we presented a summary of the divergent interpretations of Jesus' thought about his mission and the answers which these interpretations suggest to the question of our thesis.

In this final chapter an attempt will be made to set forth the writer's own conclusions in the light of the present study.

In order to understand and evaluate the life and work of any man, it would be necessary to know who he was, what he was trying to do, what obstacles he met, what alternative courses of action presented themselves to him, and what decisions he made in the light of these alternatives. It is our conviction that our study has thrown light upon the answer to these ques-

¹⁷² p. 7 f.

tions as applied to the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. While we will admit that in making an attempt of this sort one lays himself open to the charge of being "subjective" and "modern," we must reject at the outset any such position as that taken by Schweitzer, when he says,

"The self-consciousness of Jesus cannot in fact be illustrated or explained; all that can be explained is the eschatological view, in which the Man who possessed that self-consciousness saw reflected in advance the coming events, both those of a more general character, and those which especially related to Himself."¹⁷³

Christianity is not to be accounted for solely by the fact that men make events. It is also true that to some degree events make men. What has commonly been accepted as the "Christian view of history" asserts that it is possible to see an eternal judgment of God in outward historical events, and that the very force of these events themselves is a driving power through which God Himself participates in the shaping of history. Indeed history itself is the resultant of an interaction between man on the one hand and the "world," or his total external environment, on the other. Man both shapes his world and is in turn shaped by it.

This is no place to enter into a philosophical discussion of the "problem of freedom," even though it does have a direct bearing on our present study. For the present we must remain content with the assertion of a conviction that no man, not

¹⁷³ Schweitzer, QHJ, 365.

even Jesus himself, bases his decisions entirely upon a "supernatural, super-rational necessity." To hold such a view is to commit a fallacy equally serious with that of the theories of "historical necessity." Man is free, but with limitations. "Historical," "rational" and "super-rational" factors all have a part in shaping his life. But the dominant factors in determining the course which any life shall take are the ideas, attitudes and ideals to which that person gives the supreme commitment of his will.

We approach, then, this summary of our conclusions in answer to the question of our thesis from the point of view of one who is committed neither to historical nor to supernatural necessity as a basis for understanding the self-consciousness of Jesus.

B. Jesus' Thought About Himself.

What did Jesus think about himself? In what terms did he think of his relationship to God, to the people of his own age and to subsequent history? The questions are no sooner asked than we recognize the utter impossibility of ever arriving at a complete and satisfactory answer to them. Jesus left no written records of his thoughts and teachings. Even if he had, they would be so couched in an idiom foreign to us that we could not hope to understand. Clearly, the people of his own age did not understand him! Is our quest for an understanding of the self-consciousness of Jesus, then, a hopeless one? There is a very important reason for believing that it is not.

Our whole study has been undertaken with the presupposition that a man's inner thoughts and convictions will be reflected in his outward conduct. It is for this reason that we may seek, in Jesus' critical decision to go to Jerusalem for that final Passover, a clue to his thought about himself and about his mission.

If there is anything that we may be sure of with regard to the self-consciousness of Jesus, it is that he regarded himself as having a unique relationship with God, his heavenly Father. In his earliest recorded utterance he says that he must be about his "Father's business,"¹⁷⁴ while in his last recorded utterance, according to Luke, he prayed, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."¹⁷⁵ His one aim in life was "to do the will of him that sent me."¹⁷⁶ He was so thoroughly committed to this course that even when it appeared that loyalty to it would bring about his suffering and death, he could say, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt."¹⁷⁷

Parallel with this relationship was a unique relationship to his fellow men. As he was the "Son of God," so also was he the "Son of Man," though he seldom, if ever, used these terms in the apocalyptic sense. Jesus was keenly sensitive to men's needs. His miracles were not performed in order to attract attention to himself, but rather to help people who needed

¹⁷⁴ Luke 2:49.

¹⁷⁵ Luke 23:46.

¹⁷⁶ John 4:34.

¹⁷⁷ Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42.

help. Not once do we find Jesus performing miracles for his own aggrandizement. But if he was sensitive to men's physical needs, he was even more sensitive to their spiritual needs. The real tragic element in his life came through the realization that men were so busy satisfying their hunger for physical things that they were starving spiritually. In almost every one of the reported incidents in his life we may find the epitome of the course of his ministry: he came bringing spiritual food, but they were so blinded by their own preoccupation with material things that they could not see the deeper spiritual significance of what he did and said. When he ceased to feed and entertain them and demanded instead a reorganization of their beliefs, attitudes and motives, they forsook him. Given the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, they chose Barabbas.

The decision to go to Jerusalem in the face of the impending danger is the supreme illustration of a life thoroughly committed to the will of God. This decision, like all of the other important decisions of Jesus' life, was reached only after long and earnest prayer. Jesus was convinced that God's Kingdom would never be realized by military means nor by a spectacular intervention in history which relieved men of all moral responsibility. If one is to judge from the course of his life, he must have meditated long and earnestly on that verse in Zechariah which says,

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit,
saith the Lord of hosts."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Zech. 4:6.

Gradually his sense of mission had dawned upon him, and he was determined to be loyal to that mission to the very end, be that end bitter or sweet, because it was the will of God.

C. Jesus' Thought About His Mission.

What was this sense of mission which so thoroughly dominated the mind of the Master? Essentially this: it became clear to him that his unique and intimate relationship with his heavenly Father placed him in a unique position to minister to the deepest needs of his fellow men. The Kingdom of God meant the rule of God, and that rule could never find expression in the social order until it was first recognized and accepted in the hearts and minds and wills of individual men and women. His lament over Jerusalem and over the cities of Galilee was not caused by their lack of revolutionary fervor or apocalyptic expectation, but rather by their failure to understand and accept the spiritual significance of his message, for in rejecting him they had rejected God! Their own blindness was shutting them out of the Kingdom.

We have already affirmed that it is impossible to understand Jesus unless we take into account his devotion to his own nation. He believed profoundly in the divine calling of his people, and his ministry was largely an attempt to save his nation from imminent disaster, in order that it might yet fulfill its destiny by bringing the reign of God into human affairs. In this loyalty to his own people Jesus was not

being a "narrow nationalist," nor was he merely attempting to follow out to the letter the injunctions of the great prophets of the past. He recognized a fact which is now accepted almost universally: that the Jewish nation was in a unique position to act as the forerunner of the kind of message he had to bring.

"... the Hebrews represent one of those phenomena which appear again and again in biological and social evolution, different as the two are in many features. A strange and as yet inexplicable combination of circumstances selects certain groups and certain individuals to make them bearers of peculiar values. As a yet undiscovered group of primates developed the human skeleton, as India developed the decimal system and Babylonia the duodecimal, as Greece developed art, science, and philosophy, and Rome business, law, and government, so the Jews developed ethics and a spiritual monotheism."¹⁷⁹

Jesus was not a narrow Jewish "exclusivist;" his primary interest was in the children of God rather than the children of Israel. Yet

"... his patriotism and his sense of a call to national service were very deep and very real. The facts are unmistakably clear, that he did confine his work deliberately to his own nation, that he did conceive his life-task as a national salvation, and that he did stand by that conception when he could have withdrawn from his own country and by so doing have saved his life. The harmony between this national devotion and his universalism lies precisely in the fact that what he sought to do for his own people was just what all the world needed. He was not trying to bring a blessing to Israel that would have been no blessing if he had offered it to Rome. What the Jews must do to repent, was

¹⁷⁹ McCown, SRJ, 301 f.

exactly what all the world must do to repent. God's call to the Jews to be His Son, was also His call to Rome to be another Son, in His great human family. Jesus' restriction of his efforts to the Jews, therefore, is not an indication of any lack of love for Gentiles, or interest in the salvation of the world. It was a practical measure—one step in God's larger plan. Just as the conversion of his disciples was the first step toward the conversion of the nation, so (he hoped) the conversion of the nation was to be the first step toward the conversion of the world."¹⁸⁰

Here, then, were the two great convictions of Jesus' early life: (1) his unique experience of God and his devotion to God's will; (2) his conviction that Israel had a unique destiny, and that the essence of that destiny was to manifest God's will in the national life and mediate it to the rest of the world. Thus the Kingdom of God, beginning as a personal relationship between God and man in the hearts and minds of individuals, would grow, like a grain of mustard seed or the leaven in the meal, until it found expression in all phases of the national life and then continue to spread throughout the world.

But the people had misunderstood the nature of the Kingdom. They had conceived of it primarily as a political matter or as an "other-worldly" kingdom. How could they be made to see the true nature of the Coming Kingdom, and how could they be made to see that, even now, the Kingdom was a present reality in their midst, if they would only accept it? Jesus realized at this point that, as he had had a unique experience in his relationship with God and a unique insight into the

¹⁸⁰ Denny, CSJ, 196.

only workable solution to the national problem, he himself, therefore, had a unique responsibility in making the Kingdom a reality in the world. It is not strange, therefore, that Jesus, as he meditated on the scriptures, pondered the plight of his people and engaged in long hours of earnest prayer, should gradually come to the realization that, in the most important respects, he had been called to fulfill the function of the Messiah promised of old. He had in truth been summoned to lead the people into an eternal Kingdom whose founder and ruler was the God and Father of all the nations. But Jesus kept this growing realization a secret, for he knew that the people would not understand. Even his own little band of disciples were slow in realizing the true mission of their Master, but he wanted them to discover it for themselves.

D. The Alternatives Jesus Faced.

In the beginning of his ministry Jesus had planned to continue and build upon the work already begun by John. Yet his method was different. He was a quiet teacher rather than an orator; a "mingler with men" rather than an ascetic. For him, God was a forgiving Father rather than a stern judge. He agreed with John in the need for moral repentance. He also preached the "good news of the Kingdom," but he undoubtedly had a different conception of that Kingdom from that of John. His period of preparation in the wilderness had helped him to determine the true nature of the Kingdom he was to proclaim, and to formulate a tentative program for putting his

convictions into practice.

It is a fundamental principle in education that when the teacher wishes to impart a new truth, he should, insofar as is possible, attempt to relate it to knowledge that has already been acquired by the pupils, using terms with which they are already familiar. This seems to have been the method employed by Jesus. Perhaps he was aware of the dangers of this method, but in any case it led to misunderstanding among the people. They could not dissociate the idea of the "Kingdom" from their Messianic and apocalyptic hopes. When Jesus rejected their efforts to make him a "Son-of-David" Messiah, and when he failed to usher in the apocalyptic Kingdom, many people quit following him. Furthermore, the religious leaders also misunderstood him. He spoke so intimately about God that they felt he was a blasphemer. He was so indifferent to their sacred traditions and customs that they regarded him as a dangerous heretic. Finally they began plotting with the leaders of the Herodian party to have him seized and imprisoned.

Jesus was forced to rethink his whole program. Clearly it would be useless to continue his work in Galilee. The people were so blinded by their nationalism, apocalypticism and ceremonialism that it would take a long time to get them to understand the true nature of his message, and the open hostility of the religious and political leaders would not permit him to continue his work openly. A decision must be

made.

It became increasingly evident that the choice must be made among three alternatives. On the one hand, he might abandon his mission altogether. This possibility he rejected immediately.

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."¹⁸¹

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"¹⁸²

To give up now would be to forsake his Father and to deny his mission. Such a course was unthinkable. It did not even merit serious consideration.

A second possibility presented itself. He had been rejected by his own people; why not fulfill his mission among the Gentiles? They were always ready to listen to any new religious teacher who happened along, and would no doubt provide a ready audience. But Jesus well knew that seed sown on the rocky places would soon die from the heat of the sun. If his message could not take root in the fertile soil of his own country, which had been carefully prepared by generations of prophets before him, what chance was there for success in a pagan land, where religion was a plaything rather than a vital, living faith? Furthermore, had it not been made clear that it was Israel that had been chosen among the nations to

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¹⁸² Luke 9:62.

Luke 12:49,50.

bring about the New Age? Clearly, he must continue his efforts to win his own people to an acceptance of his message.

But how was this to be done? After long hours of wrestling with the problem, Jesus finally saw that the only course of action which remained was to make a final, daring attempt to appeal to those who were most likely to listen, and to do this in a place where he could get the largest possible hearing. The coming Passover in Jerusalem offered the best opportunity to carry out the resolution that had been gradually forming in his mind.

E. The Decision.

But could Jesus be sure that this was God's will? What should happen if the attempt failed? Who would carry on the work of proclaiming the Kingdom? Did the disciples understand what he was really trying to do? Would they dare to follow him in so dangerous an adventure?

Clearly there were many things that would need to be done, even if the attempt were postponed until the approaching Passover. He wanted to be sure in his own mind that this was really what God wanted him to do, and he wanted to train his disciples so that they would know what to expect and would be prepared to continue his work even if he should be seized and, as had been the case with John, be put to death.

There is, then, in the gospel story, a period of uncertainty, during which Jesus makes every effort to avoid his enemies and be alone with his disciples. One day at Caesarea Philippi

he decides to put his disciples to the test. He asks them what people are saying about him and who they think he is. They reply that some think he is Elijah, and some think that he is one of the old prophets, risen from the dead. Then suddenly he asks them, "But who do you say that I am?" and Peter answers immediately,

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!"¹⁸³

or
"Thou art the Christ!"¹⁸⁴

or
"The Christ of God!"¹⁸⁵

Concerning this confession at Caesarea Philippi, Rall says,

"Here at last was the test, and Jesus applied it under conditions that made it the more severe. These men had seen him popular, thronged by acclaiming multitudes; now he was a wanderer, his very life in peril. Nothing could have been in sharper contrast with all that was popularly associated with the name of the Messiah; the Messiah was to lead the nation and to have honor; the Messiah was to have power and overwhelm his foes. This was just their friend, in whose company they had walked and talked, had hungered and eaten, had toiled and slept, in these past months. Jesus had wrought great deeds in those days, but none of them compares with this victory in far-off Caesarea Philippi. This lonely fugitive wins from these companions of his lowly life the highest word which they as Jews could speak. They saw in him all that the prophets had looked forward to, all that their nation had longed and prayed for through the years, the Messiah of Jehovah."¹⁸⁶

Rall probably overstates the case here, for certainly

¹⁸³ Matt. 16:16.
¹⁸⁴ Mark 8:29.
¹⁸⁵ Luke 9:20.
¹⁸⁶ Rall, LJ, 101 f.

the disciples did not realize all that was bound up with the Messiahship. Only a few moments later that same Peter argues with Jesus over the question of his predicted suffering and death. They clearly have not understood what has been taking place in the mind of Jesus. Up until this time they have never connected the idea of suffering with the Messiah. But Jesus has won from them this confession which gives him the assurance that they will follow him wherever he may lead them. He must now patiently try to help them see how the Messiah may have to suffer and die before the Kingdom can come, and how they, too, may be called upon to make heavy sacrifices.

Still, there is need for a final confirmation from his Father. He wants to be sure that what he is about to undertake is what God really wants him to do. As he is to do later in Gethsemane, he takes Peter, James and John apart with him to a quiet place on the mountain to meditate and pray. It is a long struggle. He sees his work in relation to that of the earlier religious leaders of his people, Moses and Elijah. Gradually he receives the assurance that he has craved. So convinced does he become that the journey he is about to undertake is in harmony with God's will, so strong is the conviction which replaces his former uncertainty, that the disciples who are with him seem to see the very light of heaven in his face. He is ready now for the final test. Whatever may be the nature of the ordeal that awaits him in the capital, he can go there now with the calm assurance that God is with him, and that out of

the worst tragedy that could possibly befall him, his Father has the power to wrest the triumph of the Kingdom.

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."¹⁸⁷

F. The Outcome.

It is not within the province of our thesis to speculate upon the wisdom of Jesus' decision, yet it is only fair to add our conviction that subsequent history has borne out the reasonableness of the point of view we have presented. If Jesus went to Jerusalem as an apocalyptist, fully expecting God to intervene in a miraculous way to save him, or to send him back to earth upon the "clouds of heaven," he was thoroughly mistaken, and his teachings have little sanction for us. If he went as an insurrectionist, expecting to overthrow the might of the Roman Empire, he was a miserable failure. The city itself was levelled to the ground only a few years after his death.

But Jesus went to Jerusalem because he was loyal to a divine voice within, and because he believed that through his suffering and death all men might be blessed with the reign of God. Because he remained loyal to his purpose, in spite of the terrible cost of that loyalty, the record of his life, his priceless teachings and the power of his unparalleled life have enriched all succeeding generations.

¹⁸⁷ Luke 9:51.

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