

JESUS AND THE ZEALOTS : AFTERMATH¹

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FOR an author to talk about his own books is, admittedly, egotistical. But he may be justified in so doing, if he has been asked to do so, or if a situation has arisen that demands reply or further explanation from him. As you know, I have recently published two books, *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967) and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (1968), which together with my earlier book on *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (1951)² form a related trilogy on Christian Origins. These books have received much attention both in this country and abroad. This attention has varied from vehement denunciation to enthusiastic acceptance. I have been accused of denigrating Christ by representing him as a Jewish resistance leader against the Roman occupation of Judaea. On the other hand, Cardinal Daniélou has endorsed as valid my placing of "Early Christianity in the context of the anti-Roman agitation of the Zealots".³ The anonymous reviewer of *Jesus and the Zealots* in the *Times Literary Supplement* took a different view in a rather sour notice, and remarked deflatingly: "Its main thesis will convince only those who are determined to be convinced."⁴ The late Bishop

¹ A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday, the 10th of March 1971.

² Second enlarged edn., 1957; reprinted 1969. *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* has been issued in paperback edition by Paladin Books (London, 1971). There is also an American paperback edition of *Jesus and the Zealots* (Scribners, New York).

³ In *The Crucible of Christianity* (ed. A. Toynbee, London, 1969), p. 275a; cf. p. 294a. See also Cardinal Daniélou's review of *Jesus and the Zealots* in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* (1968), pp. 115-18.

⁴ Published on 27 April 1967. The editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* refused to publish a reply which listed the many errors and inaccuracies of his reviewer. The reason given (9 June 1967) was that the reviewer had delayed so long in answering the author's criticism that it was deemed too late to publish the correspondence concerned. After this experience, the author did not trouble to reply to the review in the same journal (13 February 1969) of his book *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*. A letter, sent independently by another scholar, protesting about the prejudiced character of this review, was also refused publication.

Pike, however, declared that it was “ the most exciting book I’ve picked up since I began studying theology in 1942 ”,¹ and Sir Malcolm Knox in his recently published Gifford Lectures has nicely said that “ it deserves to stand on the shelf with the great Germans of the past ”.² I have been hailed as a kind of Schweitzer *redivivus*,³ identified as a disciple of Robert Eisler,⁴ and castigated for raising old Tübingen ghosts long consigned to limbo by Harnack and Bishop Lightfoot.⁵ And that is not all. I have learned that the book was cabled for, shortly after its publication, on behalf of a Black Power leader in America, that it has been welcomed by groups of Christians seeking a militant Christ in the place of the traditional pacifist figure, and one New Testament scholar has suggested that my concern with military encounter in *Christian Origins* is to be explained by the thirteen years I served as a Regular Army Chaplain before entering academic life.⁶

The list of piquant remarks could be continued. But although they variously amuse, astound, deflate, or encourage, they all attest to a fact which every author must welcome, namely, that his books have been noticed and stirred interest, if not always as he might have hoped or anticipated. Among the many comments that have reached me I think that I am perhaps most encouraged by that of the veteran American New

¹ *New York Times*, 9 April 1968.

² *A Layman’s Quest* (London, 1969), pp. 163-5.

³ In the American magazine *Newsweek*, cited by Professor R. P. Martin in *Christianity Today*, 13 February 1970, p. 427.

⁴ Most critics who make statements to this effect reveal that they have little understanding of what is valuable and what is extravagant in Eisler’s work, or of the extent to which I disagree with him, which is fully documented in my books. In my view, few scholars today can match Eisler’s erudition, especially since it comprehended a first-hand knowledge of the Slavonic Josephus. Unfortunately Eisler too often spoils his case by pushing his conclusions too far. Students of *Christian Origins* would be well advised to regard Eisler’s *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ*, and its English epitome, primarily as a treasury of valuable information, much of which is often little known, and as a stimulus to their own studies.

⁵ The use of the “ Tübingen ” shibboleth is now rather old fashioned, and interest is notably reviving in the work of F. C. Baur : cf. P. C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology* (New York, 1966) ; *Religion und Geschichte im Gegenwart*, i. 935-8.

⁶ Walter Wink in the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, xxv (1969), 57.

Testament scholar, Professor F. C. Grant, who wrote: "If one disagrees with him, saying so is futile: the whole argument must be unwoven and redone by someone equally competent." And to this I would add the comment of Professor H. E. W. Turner: "Those who are not prepared to accept Dr. Brandon's reconstruction must nevertheless take full account of his work."¹

Apart from the normal-length reviews which do not permit of a properly reasoned case in support of the evaluations made, I know so far of some twelve extended critical studies of my interpretation of Christian Origins.² I would mention the three longest here. One is by Professor Martin Hengel, the author of that magisterial study entitled *Die Zeloten*; it takes the form of a review-article of *Jesus and the Zealots* published in the *Journal of Semitic Studies*.³ The other two are articles. One by Dr. Walter Wink, who is Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Union Theological Seminary, and is printed in the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* under the title of "Jesus and Revolution: Reflections on S. G. F. Brandon's *Jesus and the Zealots*."⁴ The other, by William Klassen, Professor of

¹ *Church Quarterly Review* (July 1967), p. 349.

² By C. F. D. Moule (Lecture to Society for Biblical Literature, New York); H. E. W. Turner (op. cit.); T. Corbishly, *The Month* (April 1969), pp. 211-18; J.-E. Ménard, *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, vol. clxxiv (1968); J. J. Scullion, *Journal of Religious History*; J. Daniélou, *Recherches de Science Religieuse* (1968), pp. 115-18; Esko Haapa, *Teologisk Tidskrift* (May 1967), pp. 193-201; F. Parente, "Escatologia e politica nel tardo Giudaismo e nel Cristianesimo primitivo", in *Revista storica italiana* (Anno lxxx, Napoli, 1968); M. Treves, *Bulletin du Cercle Ernest Renan* (October 1967); W. R. Farmer, *The Modern Churchman* (1968), pp. 117-19; D. Rees, *Downside Review* (October 1967); S. Sowers, *Theologische Zeitschrift* (1970).

³ Vol. xiv (1969), 231-40. Professor Hengel ends his review with the following observation: "As a German of my generation I have perhaps become particularly sceptical towards the concepts of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism', but in spite of this 'prejudice' on my part the question still remains whether—particularly in view of European history in the last hundred years—these concepts are fit instruments to express or reproduce in any proper way the work of Jesus and the intention of the early Palestinian Christians" (p. 240). After the two great nationalist wars of this century, most Europeans would sympathize with Dr. Hengel's feeling; but the continuing conflict between the new state of Israel and the Arab peoples tragically attests to the power of nationalist aspirations and reactions, and provide a disturbing reminder of the emotive appeal of a "Holy Land" in the twentieth century.

⁴ xxv (1969), 37-59.

Religion in the University of Manitoba, is printed in the *Canadian Journal of Theology*, and is entitled "Jesus and the Zealot Option".¹

All three studies are critical of my interpretation, which they regard as significant of a new phase in the development of New Testament Studies. According to Dr. Wink, "Brandon's works reflect the spirit of the times in every bit the same way that the old 'liberal' lives of Jesus reflected rationalist, Enlightenment Europe of the nineteenth century. Brandon is not the first to paint Jesus in the colors of a religio-political revolutionary, . . . but his is the first really thorough attempt *for which the times were ripe*."² Having thus evaluated the significance of my interpretation in its historical context, Dr. Wink goes on to deal with the danger which he thinks might stem from its influence. He fears that some readers of my books will eagerly accept the interpretation set forth in them "because they *need* Brandon's Jesus in order to be operationally relevant in radical political circles". However, he warns against the danger of the outright dismissal of my views "for reasons of orthodoxy, temperament, or vested interest".³

I must admit that I read this assessment of the influence of my writings with some astonishment and considerable concern. I had anticipated that my analysis of the tradition of the pacific Christ might have disturbed some representatives of orthodoxy; but I never imagined that my conclusions about the attitude of Jesus to his nation's cause against Rome would be welcomed in the "radical political circles" of which Dr. Wink apparently knows. There is perhaps an unintentional irony in the fact that it is Dr. Wink who thinks that my service as a Regular Army Chaplain has led me to interpret Christian Origins in terms of

¹ xvi (1970), 12-21. Sower's study (above p. 49 n. 2) should be mentioned here. It is entitled "The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight, op. cit. pp. 305-20.

² Ibid. 58-59. According to Professor R. M. Grant, "Maybe Brandon's books ring bells just because we think in social-political terms; but this is what is involved in writing history. History changes partly because our own experience raises fresh questions and permits new insights . . . his studies mark a highly important advance toward a viable modern historical picture of Jesus and the earliest Christians" (*New York Times Book Review*, 7 September 1969).

³ p. 59.

military involvement, and yet he also thinks that I depict "the Jesus which Social Christianity needs in order to justify involvement in revolution".¹

I do not intend in this lecture to answer *seriatim* all the points of criticism made by Professors Hengel, Wink and Klassen, or by other scholars. They do not question my acquaintance with the relevant evidence, but contest my interpretation of it. On many points, of course, the evidential situation is such that several different interpretations may legitimately be made, and scholars must be content to state their case and leave it for others to choose according to their own criteria of preference. In this connection, too, I would mention the new edition (1969) of Josef Blinzler's *Der Prozess Jesu*. In this valuable work of conservative scholarship, it is significant how much attention its author has felt obliged to give to what he calls the *Zelotenhypothese*.² However, in all cases, both for and against, it must be recognized that on the last analysis, decision is subtly influenced by considerations of a deeply personal kind, and from that assessment I must not except myself. But what is important, and on this point a notable advance has been achieved, is that it is now generally recognized by most of the critics that the extant evidence concerning Christian Origins is of such a nature historically that other interpretations, besides the traditional one, can be legitimately drawn.

This is a topic that I now wish to develop in connection with an adverse aspect of the reaction aroused by my interpretation of Christian Origins.

In seeking, as a historian, to understand why the Romans executed Jesus of Nazareth for sedition, I have found myself obliged to question the explanation given of the event in the Gospels. This explanation, briefly, is that Jesus was innocent of such sedition, in fact, the Gospels maintain that he had actually endorsed the Roman Government of Judaea by ruling

¹ xvi (1970), p. 57.

² *Der Prozess Jesu* (Regensburg, 1969), pp. 78-79 and notes. This concern is also very evident in the recent book by the veteran scholar C. H. Dodd (*The Founder of Christianity*, 1971). See the author's review in *The Guardian*, 25 Feb. 1971.

that the Jews should pay tribute to Caesar. That the Romans should have put one who thus supported their rule to death for sedition was due, according to the Gospels, to the plotting of the Jewish sacerdotal aristocracy and other Jewish leaders. These men hated Jesus and planned to destroy him from the start of his ministry. They finally succeeded in fabricating a charge of sedition against him, and forced a reluctant Roman governor, who recognized the innocence of Jesus, to order his crucifixion as a rebel.¹

This account of the death of Jesus is both sacrosanct and wholly convincing to most people. And it has become so essentially a part of Christian belief that even those who are prepared to be critical about other aspects of the Gospels, e.g. their stories of miracles, accept it without question. It is, moreover, the record of a deeply-moving tragedy, and it is presented in a vivid narrative that appears self-authenticating. Consequently, to question it seems to be both perverse and insensitive—surely no one, it would seem, who has sensed the pathos of this drama, can fail to be convinced by it?

I can fully appreciate why many of my critics have protested that I have charged the Gospel writers with deliberately falsifying facts, thus denigrating their characters, and, by implication, robbing the death of Jesus of that unique spiritual significance which constitutes the very quintessence of the Christian doctrine of salvation.² But this view, I must say with all respect, mistakes the nature of the Gospel record, both in its moral intent and intrinsic character. For, much as we may reverence the Passion Narrative, it must be recognized that it is essentially an explanation of a complex series of happenings in Jerusalem about the year A.D. 30. Moreover, what we conveniently call the "Passion Narrative" comprises four accounts of what transpired, and these accounts differ seriously on a number of points, as is well known.

Consequently, since no responsible scholar would today maintain that the Gospel accounts of the events in Jerusalem during that last fatal week preserve four exact eye-witness

¹ Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, chap. 7; *Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*, chap. 6.

² E.g. J. Bligh, *Heythrop Journal*, ix (1968), 57-58; J. J. Scullion, *Journal of Religious History*, p. 170.

accounts of what occurred, we are inevitably faced with complex literary and historical questions when we seek to evaluate their evidence for what happened then. For our purposes now it will be enough to note that it is generally agreed that the Markan version is the earliest, and was known by Matthew and Luke, and probably by John. This priority of Mark naturally concentrates our attention on its origins and credentials. The date of its composition is not, of course, self-evident. I date it, myself, for the year 71 or just after,¹ and I think that I can claim that the general consensus of critical opinion now seems inclined to place it after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.² But I would not press the point now, and would content myself by saying that it is generally accepted that the Gospel of Mark was written during the decade A.D. 65 to 75. But what is more important to note here is that the composition of this Gospel coincided with the Jewish revolt against Rome, which started in the year 66 and ended disastrously in 70. On its place of origin there has always been general agreement among scholars, namely, that it was written in Rome³ for the Christian community there.

To historians, therefore, the Markan Gospel is an account of events leading to the Roman execution of Jesus for sedition which was written by a Christian in Rome some forty years after those events, and at a time when Rome was involved in a hard and bitter struggle to suppress rebel Judaea. This being so, it is the obvious duty of the historian, in seeking to assess the evidential value of this account, to inquire whether the fact that the Markan Gospel was written in Rome at this time has any bearing on what it tells about the execution of Jesus as a rebel against Rome forty years before.

As a result of my own studies, I believe that the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark's Gospel does provide the key to understanding the

¹ "The Date of the Markan Gospel", *New Testament Studies*, vol. vii (1961); *Jesus and the Zealots*, chap. 5.

² It is significant that Cardinal Daniélou can write: "Brandon is no doubt right in saying that Mark, and the other evangelists after him, writing, as they were, for a Roman audience, had every reason to play down Jesus' sympathy for the revolt against Rome, rather than to underline it" (*The Crucible of Christianity*, p. 275a); cf. p. 294a.

³ See list of references in *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 221, n. 3.

original cause and the chief purpose of its composition. My conclusions I have stated at length, with full documentation, in the books concerned. Briefly, in my opinion the Markan Gospel is essentially an "Apologia ad Christianos Romanos", designed to help the Christians of Rome in a situation of great danger and perplexity in which they found themselves in consequence of the Jewish revolt against Rome. It is concerned to explain away the embarrassing fact of the Roman execution of Jesus for sedition by transferring the responsibility for it from the Roman *praefectus*, Pontius Pilate, to the Jewish high priest and Sanhedrin. To this end it represents Jesus as loyal to Rome in endorsing the Jewish obligation to pay the Roman tribute, which was fiercely repudiated by the Zealots, the Jewish nationalist party, and it depicts Pilate as, himself, testifying to the innocence of Jesus and intent on saving him from Jewish malice. The Gospel of Mark completes this encouraging picture of Roman understanding and Jewish hatred by depicting the Roman centurion, in charge of the Crucifixion, as witnessing to the divinity of the dying Jesus while the Jewish leaders gloat over his sufferings and deride him.¹

To complain, as some critics have done, that this interpretation of the Markan Gospel charges its author with deliberate falsification of the facts, confuses and emotionalizes the issue. As a historian, I have been concerned to understand this important document, not to pass a moral judgment on its author. Moreover, anyone who knows anything of the methods and mentality of ancient writers will appreciate that our modern standards of literary probity are not applicable here. To us Mark's account is certainly not a reliable objective record of what happened in Jerusalem during that fateful week. But Mark was not writing as an objective historian, and probably would not have understood what such a role meant; he was writing to help and encourage fellow-Christians in Rome at a time of sore perplexity and danger.² To him, Jesus could just

¹ Mark xv. 39; cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 279-80.

² Ranke's famous dictum of history as a presentation of the past "wie es eigentlich gewesen" reflects an ideal first formulated in the nineteenth century. Cf. R. C. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), p p. 130 ff.

not have been guilty of rebellion against Rome as were the Jewish prisoners who were paraded through the streets of Rome in the Flavian triumph of A.D. 71. But the fact that Jesus had been executed on such a charge was too well known to be denied¹; it could only be explained away. And so Mark explained it in a way that made Pilate a witness to the innocence of Jesus, and not his executioner. And, in so doing, he presented the hated leaders and people of rebel Judaea as the murderers of Christ—thereby, unwittingly, providing scriptural authority for centuries of Christian persecution of the Jews.²

That Mark would not have dared to present such a tendentious version of facts which could have been checked, as some of my critics have argued, overlooks the fact of the relative obscurity of Mark's writing. His Gospel was designed for Christian reading, and it supplied a welcome explanation of an embarrassing event. It was unlikely to have been on sale in the bookshops of Rome, or commanded the attention of the Roman intelligentsia. It is worth while to reflect in this connection that just over a century later Tertullian, in an *apologia* professedly addressed to the magistrates of the Roman Empire, declared that the Emperor Tiberius, convinced of the divinity of Christ, tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Senate to endorse his view. Tertullian implies that all this was recorded in the Roman archives.³ But no historian today would treat Tertullian's claim as founded on fact—in other words, this Christian apologist, also, was prepared in the interests of his faith to make assertions of fact that he could not possibly have substantiated, if challenged to do so. But he, too, was doubtless unconscious that by our standards he was guilty of deliberate fraud.

Another line of criticism, taken by some scholars, has been that my interpretation of Christian Origins is essentially a

¹ The reference that Tacitus makes to the Crucifixion in his *Annales* (XV. 44) testifies to the fact that it was still remembered in Roman official circles in the early second century.

² Cf. *Trial*, chap. 4.

³ *Apology*, IV. 2. In the twelfth century the eminent churchman and scholar John of Salisbury could cite a work by Plutarch which was his own invention; cf. C. Brooke, *The Twelfth Century Renaissance* (London, 1970), pp. 60-61.

complex of hypotheses, erected on a selection of the available evidence.¹ In one sense the first part of this charge is justified. My interpretation is indeed hypothetical ; but so must be every attempt to reconstruct from the relevant data an intelligible account of how Christianity began. And that, I must insist, goes also, in a very true sense, for the accounts given in the Gospels themselves and in the Acts of the Apostles. For, as I have just endeavoured to show, the earliest account of the Passion, namely, that in the Markan Gospel, is essentially an apologetical reconstruction of the events leading to the crucifixion of Jesus, and it is evidently based upon a selection of traditional information about the event. And it must be remembered also that, according to the testimony of St. Paul, within twenty years of the Crucifixion there were already two rival interpretations of the person and mission of Jesus current in the Church, namely, that which Paul calls his “ gospel ” and that of the Church of Jerusalem—indeed, Paul goes so far as to accuse his opponents of preaching “ another Jesus ”.²

Quite obviously, then, we must accept as fundamental and beyond dispute that we just do not possess any account of Jesus that is not an interpretation of the significance of his life and teaching, and is in that sense hypothetical. But it is necessary to be certain what we mean by “ hypothetical ” in this context. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines an hypothesis as a “ supposition made as the basis for reasoning, without reference to its truth ”. In science the conclusions drawn from an hypothesis can be tested by experiment, thus proving or disproving the soundness of the hypothesis ; but such demonstration is not possible in a field of study such as Christian Origins. However, there is a form of validation that can be usefully applied. Confronted with the only two facts about Jesus which can be regarded as certain, namely, that the Romans executed him as a rebel, and that a religion stemmed from Jesus which exalts him as God, certain suppositions can be made as bases

¹ E.g. Hengel, *op. cit.* pp. 235-9, who charges me with using criteria provided by my own *Tendenzkritik* ; but he ignores the *Tendenzkritik* manifest in every New Testament document and subsequent orthodox exegesis.

² Gal. i. 6-8 ; 2 Cor. xi. 3-4. Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 151-4.

for interpreting the relation of these two facts. The supposition or hypothesis made by Christian orthodoxy, and which originates in the teaching of Paul, is that Jesus was the incarnated Son of God and that his death was "a ransom for many".¹ On that hypothesis the great edifice of the Christian religion has been constructed. But faced with the same two facts, the historian of religions seeks for a more mundane hypothesis to explain them. This is what I have done in my books. And I would maintain that my interpretation is no more hypothetical than that of traditional Christianity. And I would go further and submit that in the context of the history of religions, with which I am concerned, my hypothesis provides a reasonable explanation of how the Christian movement began, and how it achieved, by the end of the first century, the pattern of belief that was to become Catholic orthodoxy.

The next issue that I have chosen for discussion is also one of basic importance for our understanding of Christian Origins, and it has a considerable intrinsic interest. From my study of what evidence we have of the primitive Jewish Church of Jerusalem, I had concluded that the members of this Church remained closely integrated with Jewish religious and social life in Judaea until A.D. 70, when the community disappeared in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.² I decided that it must have been obliterated in that catastrophe, because it ceased from that time to play any further part in the Christian movement. Previous to that fateful event, the Jerusalem Church, which was the Mother Church of Christianity, was the acknowledged source of authority and tradition for the new faith—even Paul, despite his assertion of an independent commission, had to report back to the Jerusalem leaders "lest (as he put it) by any means I should run, or had run, in vain".³ Consequently, if the Jerusalem Church had survived the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, it would surely have continued in its position of authority and prestige in the infant Christian movement. That it was apparently extinguished in the Jewish catastrophe seemed

¹ Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 10-14, where documentation is given.

² *Op. cit.* chap. 4.

³ Gal. ii. 2.

to me, moreover, to be confirmed by much evidence that pointed to the Jerusalem Christians having made common cause with their compatriots in their bid to throw off the yoke of heathen Rome and make Israel a theocracy under Yahweh.¹

This interpretation of the fate of the Jerusalem Church, which seems to be reasonable in terms of the relevant evidence, is, however, contradicted by a tradition that the Christians of Jerusalem escaped from beleaguered Jerusalem and settled at Pella, an Hellenistic city in Transjordan. This tradition is first recorded in the fourth century by Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea,² and Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus.³ In my *Fall of Jerusalem* and *Jesus and the Zealots* I examined this tradition in some detail and concluded that it originated from a claim made by the Christians of Aelia Capitolina, the city which the Emperor Hadrian founded in the year 130 on the ruined site of Jerusalem. The claim made by these Christians was that their church was the direct successor of the Mother Church of Jerusalem. I noted that this claim was never seriously accepted by the Church as a whole, and that it was not until the fifth century that the church in Jerusalem was accorded the status of a patriarchate.⁴ This assessment of what I have called the "Pella-legend" has won the acceptance of many scholars, most notably of Cardinal Daniélou and Professor G. Strecker, the latter being a specialist in the Clementine literature which derives from Jewish Christianity.⁵

Dr. Wink, however, has devoted a considerable part of his previously mentioned article to defending the historicity of this Pella tradition.⁶ He does so since, according to him, "it is essential to Brandon's thesis that he impugn the historicity of this report because it is a primary source of the impression that

¹ Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 148-9, 208-17, 219-20, 307-8.

² *Ecclesiastical History*, III, v. 2-3.

³ *adv. Haer.* XXIX. 7, cf. XXX. 2. 2; *de Mens et Pond.* XV. The Greek text of the passages concerned is given in *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 208, n. 4.

⁴ *Fall of Jerusalem*, pp. 168-73, 176-7, 264; *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 208-17.

⁵ See the review of opinions concerning the Pella-legend given in *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 209, n. 1, p. 384. See also H. E. W. Turner (cf. n. 1, p. 49); J. E. Ménard (cf. n. 2, p. 49); W. R. Farmer (cf. n. 2, p. 49).

⁶ *Op. cit.* pp. 40-46. So has Sowers (above p. 50, n. 1).

the early Jewish Christians were pacifists". Dr. Wink curiously confines his attention to what Eusebius records, and completely ignores the statements of Epiphanius. It will be necessary for discussion to quote the statement of Eusebius, which occurs in his *Ecclesiastical History* :

when the people of the church in Jerusalem, having been commanded by an oracle, given by revelation to men approved before the war, to depart from the city and to dwell in a certain city of Peraea, namely, Pella, [and] when those who believed in Christ had migrated thither from Jerusalem, so that the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea had been utterly forsaken by holy men, the judgment of God finally overtook those who had abused Christ and his apostles and completely wiped out that generation from among men.¹

Dr. Wink contends that I have tendentiously translated the passage, in order to disguise its meaning that the flight from Jerusalem took place before the war began in the year 66, or immediately after the failure of the punitive expedition of Cestius Gallus in the autumn of that year.² I have carefully checked my rendering of the text with other translations ; but I have been unable to see how I have disguised Eusebius' statement as to when the flight took place. As a matter of fact, Eusebius gives only a vague indication, namely, "before the war" (*pro tou poleμου*).³ Epiphanius seems a little more precise by saying "when the city was about to be captured and devastated by the Romans", which would suggest a time just before the siege of the city by Titus in the spring of the year 70.⁴

¹ III, V. 2-3 : I quote from my translation in *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 211.

² Ibid. p. 42, n. 16.

³ Dr. Wink (ibid.) gives what he calls a literal rendering which reads : "having been commanded by an oracle given out to esteemed men by revelation, to depart the city before the war". I honestly cannot see how Dr. Wink interprets my translation as "patently tendentious" by making it to appear that "the saints were not ordered to *leave* before the war". In trying to build up his argument on some subtle distinction, which must be apparent to him here, Dr. Wink betrays his failure to appreciate how essentially vague is the Eusebian chronology in this connection and how difficult it is to relate it to the chronology of the revolt in 66 and the subsequent campaigns. On the circumstances attending the defeat of Cestius Gallus in 66 see now the author's article in *History Today*, xx (1970), 38-46.

⁴ " ἡνίκα γὰρ ἔμελλεν ἡ πόλις ἀλίσκεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἐρημοῦσθαι " (*de Mens. et. Pons. XV*). " Χριστοῦ φήσαντος καταλείψαι τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα ἀναχωρῆσαι δι' ἣν ἤμελλε πάσχειν πολιορκίαν (*adv. Haer. XXIX. 7*).

As a matter of fact, whichever date may be implied by Eusebius or Epiphanius, namely, 66 or 70, involves insurmountable historical difficulties, as I have shown in my *Fall of Jerusalem*.¹ If Dr. Wink elects for a time before the outbreak of the revolt in 66, that date would put the Jerusalem Christians at Pella when it was later sacked by the Jewish insurgents, as Josephus records.² Their fate in that event would be obvious. For it is unlikely that a body of renegade Jews in a Gentile city, such as the Christian Jews would have been to their vengeful compatriots, would have been spared when Pella was taken and its population massacred.³ If the flight is placed after the defeat of Cestius Gallus late in 66, which is the alternative choice of Dr. Wink, then the Jerusalem Christians would have been in Pella when it was taken by the punitive expedition of Vespasian in 68. In this case it is improbable that the Romans would have spared a body of Jews occupying a Hellenistic city devastated earlier by rebel Jewish forces.⁴

However, what is more serious is that Dr. Wink has ignored, or failed to understand, the real significance of this passage in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius. It was in fact designed to round off Eusebius' philosophy of Jewish history, namely, that the catastrophic overthrow of the Jewish state in A.D. 70 was divine punishment for the crucifixion of Jesus. But the fact that some forty years had elapsed between the Crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem constituted a problem for Eusebius that needed explaining. His explanation for the delay in divine vengeance was twofold: that God had waited for the Jews to repent, and that the continued presence of the apostles and disciples in Jerusalem had afforded "a strong protection to the place".⁵ According to Eusebius, God warned the Jews of

¹ Pp. 168-72. Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 209, n. 1. ² *Jewish War*, ii. 458.

³ Josephus (*Jewish War*, v. 420-3) tells of the fate of would-be Jewish deserters at the hands of the patriots.

⁴ Josephus, *Jewish War*, iv. 413-39. It should be noted that the Romans wiped out the Qumran community in 68; cf. R. de Vaux, *L'archéologie et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte* (London, 1961), pp. 75-84. Sowers (op. cit. p. 309) forgets that Pella had been taken by the Jewish insurgents, when he states that Pella "had never been involved in the revolt".

⁵ *Ecccl. Hist.* III, vii. 8-9: ἔρκος ὡσπερ ὀχυρώτατον παρέμενον τῷ τοπῶ.

their impending fate, if they did not repent, by a series of supernatural portents. As evidence of this warning, he cites *in extenso* the account which Josephus gives in his *Jewish War* of the marvels that foretold the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Then, after a digression on Josephus and his writings, he returns to his theme by making the murder of James, the brother of Jesus and head of the Church of Jerusalem, the immediate cause of the destruction of the city.¹ It is in this context, therefore, that Eusebius sets his story of the flight of the Jerusalem Christians from the doomed city. But his chronology is fundamentally imprecise, because the death of James occurred in the year 62, and so could not be regarded as immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70.² It is, incidentally, significant to note that Eusebius records that Hegesippus, a second-century Palestinian Christian, also made the death of James the immediate cause of the destruction of Jerusalem.³ We have not yet, however, seen the sum of Eusebius' vagueness and self-contradiction in this connection. For he also relates how, after the death of James and the capture of Jerusalem, all the surviving apostles and disciples met there and elected Symeon, the son of Clopas and a cousin of Jesus, to succeed James as bishop of Jerusalem.⁴ Further, he records a tradition that Symeon continued as bishop of Jerusalem until his martyrdom in the time of Trajan.⁵

Such, then, is the nature of Eusebius' account of the fortunes of the Jerusalem Church. In the present context, all that can be safely inferred from it is that in the fourth century a tradition, of doubtful origin and credibility, existed that the original Christian community of Jerusalem had fled from the city and settled in Pella before the war or the siege of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the fact that a specific city is named as the place of

¹ *Eccl. Hist.* III, xi. 1: μετὰ τὴν Ἰακώβου μαρτυρίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτίκα γενομένην αἰλωσιν τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴν . . . Sowers also fails to evaluate the Pella legend in terms of Eusebius's philosophy of Jewish history.

² Cf. Brandon, "The Death of James the Just: a new interpretation", in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to G. G. Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1967).

³ II, xxii. 18: καὶ εὐθὺς Οὐεσπασιανὸς πολιορκεῖ αὐτούς (the Jews); cf. *ibid.* 19. Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 119.

⁴ III, xi. 1. Cf. III, xxii, xxxii. 1, xxxv; IV, v. 3-4.

⁵ III, xxxii. 2-4. Eusebius cites Hegesippus as his source here.

refuge is certainly significant ; and it needs explanation, even if the tradition of an emigration *en masse* of the Jerusalem Christians from the beleaguered city cannot be regarded as historical.

To gain some understanding of this mention of Pella, it is necessary to appreciate the great confusion that existed in the fourth century about the Christian situation in Palestine in the first and second centuries, as revealed in the relevant writings of Eusebius and Epiphanius. The former, as we have seen, records a migration of the Jerusalem Church to Pella, yet he also implies that a succession of Jewish bishops held office in Jerusalem from the death of James until the Bar Cochba revolt in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. On the other hand, he also declares that the Christian community of Aelia Capitolina, the Roman city which Hadrian established in 130 on the ruined site of Jerusalem, was wholly Gentile in composition.¹ Epiphanius, who was primarily concerned with Jewish Christian heretical sects, mentions the sect of the Nazarenes at Pella as being descended from the Jerusalem Christians who had settled there before the siege of the city. But he also states that those whom he calls "the disciples of the disciples of the apostles" had returned from Pella to Jerusalem.² Since he seems here to be referring to what would have been a third apostolic generation, this return would probably have taken place about the time of the establishment of Aelia Capitolina. But, on this interpretation, the Christian community on the site of ancient Jerusalem would have been Jewish, and not wholly Gentile as Eusebius asserts.

Out of this welter of fourth-century tradition it seems to me that an intelligible pattern of claims and counter-claims, made by Christian communities in Palestine at this time, can be discerned. First, it is important to remember that there were Jewish Christians living in other parts of Palestine besides those that constituted the Mother Church of Jerusalem in the first century.³ How they fared during the four years of war against

¹ IV, vi. 4 (ἐξ ἔθνων συγκροτηθείσης) ; V, xii. 1.

² *Mens. et Pons.* XV (. . . ὁρῶν τοὺς μαθητὰς τῶν μαθητῶν ἀποστόλων ἀνθοῦντας τῇ πιστεῖ, . . . ἦσαν γὰρ ὑποστρέψαντες ἀπὸ Πέλλης τῆς πόλεως εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴν . . .). Cf. A. Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity* (E.T., 1905), ii. 248, n. 1, citing Epiphanius, *Haer.* XXIX. 7.

³ Cf. Harnack, ii. 247 ff.

Rome is unknown ; but, without doubt, many survived—some probably had sought shelter in Transjordan, at Pella and other places, at various times during and after the campaign. These essentially Jewish communities, practising the Jewish Law, came in process of time, owing to their isolation and primitive beliefs and practices, to be regarded as heretics by Gentile Christians, with whom the future of Christianity lay.¹ But the Jewish Christians claimed that they preserved the true form of the faith, and they naturally maintained that they were descended from the original Mother Church of Jerusalem, and thus inherited its authority and status.

There would also have been in Palestine, from an early period, communities of Gentile Christians, most notably at Caesarea, which had long been the headquarters of the Roman government of the country.² In process of time, it would have been natural for these Gentile communities also to claim that they represented the original Church of Jerusalem, which they tended to idealize as Luke had done towards the end of the first century, and as Hegesippus did in the second century.³ When the Emperor Hadrian established his new city of Aelia Capitolina on the historic site of Jerusalem, it was Gentile Christians who settled there, if Eusebius is to be believed.⁴ For these Christians the temptation to see themselves as the legitimate successors of the original *Urgemeinde* must have been particularly great—it is possible that Epiphanius' statement about "the disciples of disciples of the apostles", who returned from Pella to Jerusalem, preserves a reminiscence of their claim.⁵

But though the claim was made and recorded, it clearly did

¹ Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 217 and notes. See also P. E. Testa, *Il simbolismo dei Giudeo-Cristiani* (Jerusalem, 1962), pp. xix-xxxii.

² Cf. Harnack, ii. 265-6; J. Finegan, *Archeology of the New Testament* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 70 ff.

³ The account of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples gathered at Jerusalem instituted the Church according to Acts ii. 1 ff. *Acts* also attests to the continuance of the *Urgemeinde* as the fount of faith and authority, to which Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, has to report (Acts xxi. 17 ff). See Hegesippus's account of James the Just (in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, II, xxiii. 4 ff).

⁴ See n. 1, p. 52.

⁵ The discipleship does not relate to racial descent. Gentile Christians of Pella might well have claimed such spiritual ancestry.

not win for the church of Aelia Capitolina that recognition of status and authority that would rightfully have belonged to it, if it had truly descended from the Mother Church of Jerusalem. The see of Caesarea long overshadowed that of the new Gentile Jerusalem.¹ There is also an interesting comparison to be made in this connection. According to rabbinic tradition, the famous Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai succeeded in escaping in a coffin from beleaguered Jerusalem to Jamnia, where he founded the celebrated centre of rabbinical learning and authority.² Now, if the original Christian community had also escaped from Jerusalem and settled at Pella, surely it should have made Pella, in like manner, an unchallenged centre of Christian authority and tradition. And it is right to expect that this preeminence should be clearly attested in Christian literature. Instead, except for the late and confused Pella-legend, complete silence descends upon the Mother Church of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This sudden extinction is a historical fact, and it surely cannot be unconnected with the catastrophe that then befell the Jewish state.³

I will end my commentary on the aftermath of *Jesus and the Zealots* with a brief reference to an aspect of the issue which some people will doubtless regard as the most serious. It may be best put as follows: if on historical grounds there is reason for doubting the Gospel explanation of the Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus, what are the consequences for the Christian faith? In other words, if Jesus had effectively identified himself with his people's cause against the government of heathen Rome, instead of supporting that government as the Evangelists represent, would that fact require a serious rectification of our view of him?

I believe that once we consider this issue fairly we become aware that there are two different issues involved, namely, the

¹ Cf. Harnack, ii. 248, 256-8; *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 216, n. 1.

² Cf. G. F. Moore, *Judaism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), i. 83-84; J. Neusner, "In Quest of the Historical Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai", in *Harvard Theological Review*, lix (1966), 399-400; *Jesus and the Zealots*, p. 216, n. 4.

³ It is to be hoped that the Wooster Expedition to Pella will unearth evidence of the earlier Christian settlement there; cf. *Wooster Alumni Magazine* (January 1968) on "Pella 1967".

theological and the historical. The theological issue is essentially concerned with the soteriological evaluation of the Crucifixion as the divinely covenanted means of mankind's salvation. But if Jesus had been crucified for his involvement in Israel's struggle for political and religious freedom (in the Jewish mind these two freedoms were essentially one), then his death cannot be given its orthodox theological evaluation. However, I surmise that many Christians today would be hard put to say how far they find that evaluation relevant to the world of their experience. That the Crucifixion has some deep significance they would all agree; but that significance is not meaningfully expressed for them in the traditional formularies. And it is here, I think, that we may be finding our way to a new conception which is presented in a more intelligible idiom by recent historical research.

The new understanding that has emerged of Zealotism in the last decade has set the career of Jesus of Nazareth in a more realistic context than was evidenced before. He no longer appears to float above the realities of contemporary Jewish life. The death he suffered was one that many Zealots suffered at the hands of the Romans for refusing to acknowledge Caesar as lord and to give of the resources of the Holy Land in tribute to the emperor of heathen Rome, whom the Gentiles revered as a god.¹ For the Zealots such acts constituted apostasy towards Yahweh, the god of Israel, and they were prepared to face death by crucifixion for their faith. But the resistance they offered was not passive. Phineas was their prototype, whom Yahweh commended for his zeal, and the Maccabees were examples of what might be achieved through the martyr-ideal.²

Now, as I see it, a Jesus who espoused the justice of his people's cause, which also meant putting an uncompromising

¹ Cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 32-34, 56-58.

² Cf. *op. cit.* pp. 43-47. In a recent article ("Zealots and Sicarii, their Origins and Relation", *Harvard Theological Review*, lxiv (1971), 5-6, 17, n. 91) Morton Smith has revised the old contention of Kirsopp Lake that there were no Zealots before A.D. 66, and makes special reference to my thesis. He dismisses the gospel evidence as "a bad pun", and neglects the significant fact that Mark avoided giving the Greek translation of "the Kananaioi"; cf. *Jesus and the Zealots*, pp. 243-5.

emphasis upon the sovereignty of Yahweh, need not be for us a lesser figure than one who contracted out of political realities because he was concerned only with transcendental values. Then, the stubborn fact of his execution by the Romans for sedition must be reckoned with. Was it all really an awful mistake, as the Gospels make out, and did the Romans actually execute as a rebel one who publicly supported their government? Or did Jesus die as a martyr for Israel, as many Zealots did, because he spoke out against the injustice and impiety of the Roman rule and against the Jewish sacerdotal aristocracy that collaborated with it? And a further question: did the actions of Jesus match his words?

We can only weigh probabilities here; we cannot prove anything. But our one certain fact is that the Romans did execute Jesus for sedition. The political issue, which this fact implies, cannot now be disregarded, as it was in the past, if we truly wish to concern ourselves with the historical Jesus who lived and died in Judaea when Pontius Pilate was the "praefectus" there. In saying that, I should like to end by saying also that Christians should not fear to contemplate the possibility that Jesus did involve himself with what was then the supreme issue for every patriotic Jew, and that in consequence he died a martyr's death for Israel.¹

¹ My interpretation of Christian Origins has generally met with sympathy and interest from Jewish scholars: e.g., cf. S. Sandmel, *The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity* (New York, 1969), pp. 190-1, 218, in *Judaism*, vol. 20 (1971): "The Trial of Jesus in the Light of History: A Symposium", p. 72; Haim Cohn, *The Trial and Death of Jesus* (New York, 1971), pp. 169, 335 (14), 336 (19), 350 (51), 373 (66).