

education and of the adaptation of the Church to Congolese conditions, or rather, of the adaptation of Congolese conditions to the Church, for the question is not to insert the Church in the Congolese culture, but to find the most efficacious way of nourishing Congolese life by the Christian religion.

S. N. KISANGA, O.P.

Scripture Survey

FROM WREDE TO THE NEW QUEST

Von Reimarus zu Wrede was the original title of Albert Schweitzer's book in 1906. In the translation made by William Montgomery and published in 1910, the title was freely rendered as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, and thus an important phrase in New Testament scholarship arrived. The original title indicated the author's desire to outline the development of thought on the Gospels since the work of H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768), published in 1778, which he saw as a first attempt to present Jesus as an historical person freed from all dogmatic preoccupations, to the work of Wilhelm Wrede (1859-1906) of 1901, which was concerned with the presentation of Jesus' ideal, the *Messiasgeheimnis* as the principal theme of the Gospels, freed this time from all historical preoccupations. For Wrede the preaching of Jesus was far more central to the Gospel than any attempt to portray an historical person, and Schweitzer saw the development of this point of view as the beginning of a new era. This indeed it was, and Schweitzer's own thought, epitomized in the brilliant title coined by his translator, suggested that the Quest had come to an end: Schweitzer's quest was leading him to see the whole meaning of the Gospel in the eschatology of Christ's message, that is, in his preaching to mankind of the coming end of all things, and the consequent need for mankind to prepare for a spiritual renewal. For Schweitzer, the Master's preaching looked forward to a fulfilment that never came, but nevertheless the significance of his preaching *for me* and for every one of his followers makes it the greatest teaching ever given to mankind. Schweitzer presented Jesus as the great idealist and it is essential to see Schweitzer's teaching on the background of his own personality, for his understanding of Christ's message led his own generous spirit to throw up everything to become a medical missionary in Africa. For Wrede the whole secret of the Gospel lay in Jesus' messianic ideal; for Schweitzer not only was this so, but the preaching of Jesus emerges as the dominant factor, with an effect on the lives of all Christians.

It was on the background of these discussions that Loisy's 'petit livre' *L'Évangile et l'Église* appeared in 1902, with his call for the reconciliation of these

findings with Catholic theology—and all the attendant difficulties of Modernism—and almost simultaneously Lagrange's *La Méthode Historique*, also in 1902, insisting that the full literary, historical and archaeological investigations rendered possible by modern scholarship would certainly lead us to an understanding entirely consonant with the teaching of revelation in orthodox theology.

Where has the Quest gone during the last sixty years? In 1962 there was published a collection of essays by T. W. Manson (1958)¹, in the first of which, an address given in 1949 and entitled *The Quest of the Historical Jesus—continued*, he reviews the developments since his own student days, when the methods of source-criticism brought into New Testament studies by Wellhausen in 1906 had led K. L. Schmidt in 1919 to reject the value of the historical framework of the Gospels, and when in the same year M. Dibelius had brought into currency the term *Formgeschichte* or 'Form-Criticism'. As Manson says, 'the term "Form-Criticism" should be reserved for the study of the various units of narrative and teaching, which go to make up the Gospels, in respect of their form alone. . . . But Form-Criticism got mixed up with two other things. One was K. L. Schmidt's full-scale attack on the Marcan framework; the other was the doctrine of the *Sitz im Leben*. . . [namely] that the Gospels should be studied in their context—so far as we can know it—of the interests, problems and practical needs of the people who first used them. No doubt particular stories and sayings were useful to missionary preachers of the first century: no doubt they gave guidance to the early communities on questions of faith and conduct. But we are travelling much too far and too fast, if we infer from that that they were created by the community to serve these ends or meet these needs' (pp. 4, 5, 6). It was from such an inference that the position of Prof. Bultmann arose, with his *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, in 1921, which is 'an account, not of how the life of Jesus produced the tradition, but of how the tradition produced the life of Jesus. And when the work of the tradition has been undone, there is very little of Jesus left' (Manson, p. 6). This was the situation which was challenged by Professor MacKinnon in a recent broadcast entitled *The Bultmann Cul-de-sac*². And in 1949 Manson was saying that ' . . . this kind of thing has gone on too long. . . . What is long overdue is a return to the study of the Gospels as *historical documents*' (p. 8), and that 'it is necessary to continue the quest of the historical Jesus' (p. 10). And the succeeding essays in the book, all dating from 1943 to 1950, are labelled by the editor 'Materials for a Life of Jesus'. It is important to notice how for scholars of today of the stature of Manson, the Quest, far from ending in a cul-de-sac, is being vigorously resumed.

Another important book of 1962 in this context is a collection of articles written between 1947 and 1961, by John A. T. Robinson, now Bishop of Wool

¹*Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, by T. W. Manson, edited by M. Black, with memoir by H. H. Rowley; Manchester University Press, 1962; 30s.

²BBC, June 4th 1962.

wich³, which includes a paper, given in 1957 and entitled *The New Look on the Fourth Gospel*. Here again one notices the present abandonment of 'what might be called the "critical orthodoxy" [of] the last fifty years. . . still represented in the most recent commentaries and textbooks' (p. 94), where, for instance, the Fourth Evangelist is 'not to be regarded, seriously, as a witness to the Jesus of history, but simply to the Christ of faith' (p. 95). A few years before, Manson had said that 'the question of the historical value of the Fourth Gospel is wide open again' (Manson p. 10). The 'new look' sees a new 'valuation of the [Fourth] Gospel as history' (p. 106), because it affirms the continuity of the Johannine tradition from the lifetime of Jesus himself. In the short preface to the book Dr Robinson writes of his 'unsatisfied curiosity to push behind commonly accepted positions of New Testament study, and to explore and test alternative hypotheses'. And one remembers the position he took in his earlier book on the Parousia⁴, when he wrote (p. 158) that 'all that lies at the heart of the Parousia doctrine was already there in the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of the primitive Church'.

The now well-known analysis of Professor James M. Robinson, of the South California School of Theology at Claremont, in 1959⁵ has brought the phrase 'The New Quest' into general currency. It was Professor C. H. Dodd's work of 1936, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Development*, that gave prominence to the idea that the *kerygma*, or primitive Christian preaching, is an outline not only of Christ's message, but of an historical sketch of his ministry. Professor James Robinson's main thesis was that the new view of history today, studying the significance of persons rather than of events—he quotes F. M. Powicke in this connexion on p. 30—must be applied to the Gospels, and that then the *kerygma* is seen to be not a falsification, nor even an 'overlaying' or eclipsing by tradition of the 'historical Jesus', but on the contrary the presentation of a living personality. 'We have come to recognize', wrote Professor James Robinson, 'that the objective factual level upon which the nineteenth century operated is only one dimension of history, and that a whole new dimension in the facts, a deeper and more central plane of meaning, had been largely bypassed. The nineteenth century saw the reality of the "historical facts" as consisting largely in names, places, dates, occurrences, sequences, causes, effects—things which fall far short of being the actuality of history, if one understands by history the distinctively human, creative, unique, purposeful, which distinguishes man from nature. The dimension in which man actually exists, his "world". . . the significance he had as the environment of those who knew him, the continuing history his life produces, the possibility of existence which his life presents to me as an alternative—such matters as these have become central in an attempt to understand history. It was this deeper level of the reality of "Jesus of Nazareth as he actually was" which was not reached by "the reconstruction of his bio-

³*Twelve New Testament Studies*, by John A. T. Robinson; SCM Press, 1962; 13s. 6d

⁴*Jesus and his Coming*, by John A. T. Robinson; SCM Press, 1957; 15s.

⁵*A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, by James M. Robinson; SCM Press, 1959; 9s. 6d

graphy by means of objective historical method". Consequently the two meanings of the term "historical Jesus" [in the sense of nineteenth century historical method and in the sense of history today] no longer coincide' (p. 28f.) This means that while the nineteenth century Quest led, after Schweitzer, to the conclusion that the Quest was impossible—and Professor James Robinson had a chapter entitled *The Impossibility and Illegitimacy of the Original Quest*—the New Quest is going ahead on new lines, and, far from seeming impossible, by means of a 'new look' on the Gospels as historical documents is beginning to look once more upon the real person of the 'historical Jesus'.

It is interesting that in still another book which appeared in 1962, dealing with the origins of the New Testament⁶, and again a collection of essays dating from between 1948 and 1960, Professor W. D. Davies of Union Theological Seminary, New York, entitles his first chapter *A Quest to be resumed*. He looks upon his own 'revered teacher' (p. 3) Professor C. H. Dodd as the one who more than any other influenced 'the change from the analytic [of the Form-Critics] to the synthetic approach to the New Testament' when he indicated 'a common unifying core, . . . the Kerygma of the primitive community, [which] turned out to be a series of events—the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth' (p. 4). For Professor Davies, the Kerygma 'points to history' and therefore 'the intention of the Evangelists was, in large part, historical' (p. 11). His particular interest in this book is the historical background of Judaism into which Jesus was born, including the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He refers to Professor James Robinson's 'New Quest', but prefers to think of it as the resumption of the old quest in a 'post Form-Critical' and 'post-Kerygmatic' era (p. 16).

Lastly, although the book is not directly concerned with the Quest, we should record with happiness the appearance of a new edition of Professor Cullmann's famous book on St Peter⁷. The English translation of the original edition appeared in 1953, and this new English edition, slightly revised here and there, and frequently expanded, incorporates many new observations resulting from debate with 'my Roman Catholic dialogue partners' after the book's first appearance, 'almost without exception. . . on the high level of scientific integrity' (Prof. Cullmann's own preface to this edition). The exegetical treatment of the Petrine text in St Matthew, slightly developed from the previous edition, once more witnesses to the historical value recognized in the Gospel by New Testament scholars of today.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

⁶*Christian Origins and Judaism*, by W. D. Davies; Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962; 32s.

⁷*Peter, Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (Second Edition) by Oscar Cullmann; SCM Press, 1962; 25s.