

Tools of the Gentile Mission

In section on divine man q we saw how Hellenistic Jews would select elements in Hellenistic culture that they felt compatible with their own tradition, would ignore or even polemicize against other elements they felt incompatible: cf son of God, theos

It is antecedently probable that early Xtians preaching to the Gentile world proceed in a similar fashion

In both cases there was a certain unconscious adoption of some gentile points of view.

The converts at Antioch prior to their conversion had already been living on the fringe of the synagoga, and with them the Hellenistic Jewish tradition (LXX) was dominant. But at Corinth the gentile element was dominant and here it was inevitable that preachers would have to speak to the existing culture.

The Imperial Cultus

Ruler-worship spread from the orient through the diadochoi who ruled the east from 323 BC to ~~XXXXX~~ the Roman conquest in the first century BC. The Romans retained <sup>it</sup> in the east and gradually introduced <sup>it</sup> in the west.

KURIOS originally a sociological term: superior of inferior. Occasionally applied to a Greek deity from time of Pindar on, but Greeks democratic and the gods as lords was not a constitutive element in Greek Religion.

When after 323 or 9th century religions began to flood into the Greek world, kurios became a constitutive religious title.

The earliest evidence of kurios being applied to a ruler is from Egypt where the term frequently applied between 64 and 50 BC. The earliest instance of its application to a Roman emperor also is from Egypt (Augustus in 12 BC)

Strictly it is theos and not kurios that denotes the emperor as divine. But the distinct <sup>ion</sup> quickly became academic: there were lords aplenty in the oriental cults: Nero in 66 AD hailed as lord of the whole world.

Xtians restrained in speaking of Jesus as God until Ignatius of Antioch. The Johannine "My Lord and my God" could have been lifted from imperial cultus

Son of God sometimes used of emperor; this not a Xtian origin, but note that it was kurios and uios theou that stuck in the church

Kaisar Soter was one of the regular slogans in imperial cultus; but soter was also common in the oriental religions, and so exclusive influence of the imperial cultus ~~is~~ cannot be claimed. However 1 Tim 1 10: the epiphany of our Lord and S vior Jesus Christ. Obviously the imperial cultus is one source for the expression Use of tools from imperial cultus marginal in character.

#### THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

Greek: Eleusis, Dionysos, Orphic

Oriental: Cybele and Attis in Phrygia), Adonis and Attagatis in Syria, Isis-Osiris and Serapis in Egypt, and much later and very different cult of mithras.

Originally they were vegetation and fertility cults. Purely local. Later they became more spiritual promising not only fertility but also a blessed immortality after death. In this form they became great missionary religions and competitors with Xtianity.

Fifty years ago it was being promulgated that Xtianity ~~was~~ plagiarized the mystery cults. It transferred the myth of a dying and rising god on Jesus of Nazareth. The sacraments of baptism and eucharist were adaptations of cultic rites.

In its extreme form the theory of ~~is~~ plagiarism is abandoned by ~~many~~ serious scholars. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth have nothing to do with fertility cults or with the seasons of the natural year. They are attached to a historical person of the recent past. Their origin was in the early Palestinal church which lay outside the range of the mystery cults.

In their interpretations of their data and in their presentation of the evidence students of the mystery cults are fond of using the language of Xtianity. This is just begging the question. This is particularly so in their speech of the dying and rising god. It is true that the cults commonly are centered on a myth in which the god symbolizes the death of nature in winter and its rebirth in spring. They do not speak of the god dying and rising, though they speak of him descending into the lower world and returning. The idea of resurrection in the NT sense seems to have been foreign to antiquity. As for the initiate the documents speak of him as sharing not the death but the sufferings of the god, and of rebirth rather than resurrectio~~n~~,

The theme of plagiarism of the mystery religions has a modified form proposed by Bousset and enjoying considerable vogue in Bultmann school

Bousset recognizes that the title Mar = Lord was used in Palestinian Xtianity and that baptism and the Lord's supper were practised there.

But Mar had meant Jesus as the coming Son of k man while Kurios and Soter means Jesus as a cult deity. The sacraments had meant a foretaste of life in the eschatological kingdom of God; but in Hellenistic environment they meant participation in the fate, the death and resurrection, of the cult deity.

Fuller drops question of sacraments; deals only with Kurios and Soter.

Disagrees with P Wendland, E Meyer, A Schweitzer, F C Grant who argue that the floruit of the cult religions was 2nd century and consequently irrelevant to origins of Xtianity

Argues that while the floruit may well have been the second century still the mystery religions were age old, that Antioch was in close contact with the Cybele and Attis cult, that Corinth was near Eleusis, that the ~~xx~~ cults had been transplanted beyond their homeland: Cybele and Attis in Rome in 204 BC; Isis in mainland Greece in 333 BC; Adonis cult in Greece and Italy long before Xtianity. Again, Isis was named kuria 99-90 BC; Kronos was named kurios in the time of Augustus in an inscription from Syria; Paul acknowledged gods many and lords many (1 Cor 8 5).

The Xtian title of Jesus, Kurios, comes from Ps 110 1

But the interpretation of this title and of Soter in the Xtian Gentile milieu will depend on the exegesis of particular texts. There is no a priori solution

### THE GNOSTIC REDEEMER MYTH

Proposed by Lidzbarski and developed by Reitzenstein and commonly accepted by the Bultmann school

Like Q it is just a hypothesis. As there is much in common between Matthew and Luke and so there is postulated a source, Q, for this common material, so also there is much in common between Xtianity and Gnosticism and so there is postulated a common origin for the two views. It is the Gnostic Redeemer myth, the redeemed redeemer.

This postulate hits off a vital area in NT study: what is the origin of the difference between Hellenistic Judaism and the Gentile mission, of what Fuller calls the Xtological Hymns pp 204-227 According to Bultmann and his followers, the origin is the Gnostic redeemer myth. According to Fuller that myth is post-Xtian.

As already shown there did exist a wisdom myth: wisdom dwelt in a series of emissaries from Adam on; it was a source of gnosis and so of redemption through gnosis; but in the myth there is no record of wisdom becoming incarnate in a single man; and that is what Xtianity is about.

There also is the view of an eschatological Son of man, hidden from the beginning, revealed at the end of times, the source of redemption for the elect.

The first is applied to Jesus in the Gentile mission in which the Word was made flesh. The second was applied to Jesus in the early Palestinian church

The Gnostics tried to bring the two together but the result was a docetism. Wisdom or Logos was only apparently a man, and certainly not one who suffered and died.

On Gnosticism

George MacRae NCE VI?

Werner Foerster, Gnosis, A Selection of Gnostic Texts,

I. Patristic Evidence, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972

II. Coptic Texts from Nag Hammadi (to come)

E. T. Edited by R. McL. Wilson.

Georgi Strugnell

## THE DIVINE MAN

As already seen, in Hellenistic Judaism the Hellenistic notion of theios aner was taken over in so far as it had points of contact with Judaic tradition but for the rest was vigorously eschewed.

The Hellenistic divine man had within himself the divine substance or power and so was able to enjoy ecstatic experiences, to utter prophecies, to do miracles, and perform egregious feats.

Most of the evidence for this divine man is post-Xtian in origin and Prümm suggests that it was plagiarised from Xtian sources.

But the polemics of pre-Xtian Hellenistic Jewish writers against the divine man concept indicate that the concept was fully established in pre-Xtian times. Further ~~x~~ both Jewish and pagan writers were not slow to point out the similarities between the gospel stories and those of the Hellenistic world.

Fuller concludes that we have to remain open to the possibility of a Hellenistic influence on the gospels.