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CHAPTER I

JESUS AND THE GENTILES

This brief discussion of Jesus' attitude towards the Gentiles is by way of a preliminary to the main theme of the book. It is included for two main reasons: first, it provides us with the primary attitude towards the Gentiles, with which later developments can be compared; and second, it gives us a key both to Jesus' teaching on eschatology and to the relationship between the themes of the Gentiles and eschatology. In the course of our discussion we shall be faced with two conflicting strands of evidence. This has inevitably led to strong suspicions about the authenticity of one or other strand, or even of both. We shall discuss first, therefore, the material which can reasonably be said to be authentic, to see whether it gives a uniform picture. The more controversial texts will be left till last, so that they can be discussed in relation to the overall picture gained from the other material. Further, it should be noted that two distinct questions are in mind throughout this chapter: first, what was Jesus' attitude towards the Gentiles and second, the more specific question, did he foresee a historical Gentile mission?

BACKGROUND

A complete treatment of the Gentiles in Jesus' teaching would involve a full discussion of the theme of mission in the Old Testament and Judaism. However, the majority of recent authors have reached similar and, as far as one can see, correct conclusions. A short summary of the conclusions relevant to our study, therefore, will suffice at this point.

First, one must distinguish in the Old Testament between universalism and mission. The former notion asserts that God is Lord of all the earth, including all the nations other than Israel, but it does not imply that Israel has any responsibility for evangelising other peoples. The idea that God is Lord of all creation may be an essential presupposition for universal

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mission, but the idea of mission is not, at least for the Old Testament, a logical implicate of universalism.

The classic expression of the Old Testament's most consistent positive approach to the nations is found in Is. 2: 2-4 (Mal. 4: 1-4. Cf. Is. 18: 7; Jer. 3: 17, 16: 19; Is. 45: 18-25, 60: 1f; Zeph. 3: 8-11; Hag. 2: 6-9; Zech. 2: 10-13, 14: 16). The idea is that of the nations' pilgrimage to Zion in the last days, when they will witness the glory of Yahweh mediated in and expressed through his relationship with Israel. In all these passages the important elements are the following: first, in all of them Israel is the centre of attention; it is Yahweh's relationship with her that the nations see and respond to. Second, none of them speak of a missionary role of Israel; rather, it is emphasised that the influx of the nations is a result solely of the intervention of Yahweh. Third, a point related to the last one, the view of history implied in these passages is centripetal rather than centrifugal; Israel does not go out to reach the nations, but the nations come to Jerusalem to witness God's dealings with Israel. Finally, it should be noted that most of these passages see these events as occurring in the End-time and not before. The two main places to which people point when they wish to prove that the Old Testament has a concept of mission, namely Jonah and Second Isaiah, in fact add nothing new in terms of mission to the picture gained from the passages already quoted.

In later Judaism the notion of the eschatological pilgrimage of the nations is retained, but it plays a less important role (Tob. 13: 13; Sib. Or. III, 716f, 772f; Test. Ben. 9: 2; I En. 10: 21, 48: 5, 53: 1, 90: 33; Ps. Sol. 17: 31; IV Ezr. 13: 12f). In apocalyptic writings and the Qumran literature there is no evidence for the idea of winning over the Gentiles; the opposite hope, namely for their destruction, is far more prominent. Even in the Rabbinic tradition, for example among the Shammaites, a negative attitude is found.

The more positive proselytising efforts of Judaism, while in some respects paving the way for the later Christian mission, are to be distinguished from the concept of mission as it developed in the early Church. The Jewish approach to the heathen was basically a matter of private enterprise undertaken by individuals; it did not spring from a belief that the community as a whole had a responsibility for all mankind. Nor was there any

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consciousness of a special divine commission for this task. Also, the eschatological basis of the Gentiles' conversion, which was so important for Jesus and the early Church, played no role in the efforts of Judaism. Finally, they were limited by a nationalistic approach, since for them there was an inseparable connection between religion and national custom – an attitude from which, if at first a little reluctantly, the early Church did eventually break free.¹

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We turn first to a passage whose authenticity is rarely doubted, namely Matt. 8: 11 (Lk. 13: 28). There are several factors which support its authenticity: the Semitic style,² Aramaisms,³ and the Jewish thought-mode, namely the ideas of the Messianic banquet and of the damned seeing the blessed.⁴ The πολλοί here are clearly the Gentiles, since they are contrasted with the 'sons of the kingdom', that is, the Jews (Matt. 11: 19). The time reference is, however, disputed. Some scholars make the improbable suggestion that it refers to the present reality of Jesus' ministry.⁵ F. Hahn claims that the reference is not merely to 'the future, but that the future and present aspects are bound up together', and he points to Lk. 12: 8 for support.⁶ But

¹ For further information on this subject the reader is referred to J. Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London, 1965), pp. 11–19; F. Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London, 1965), pp. 18–25; D. Bosch, *Die Heidenmission in der Zukunftschau Jesu* (Zürich, 1959), pp. 17–43; J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London, 1959), pp. 264–72; R. Martin-Achard, *A Light to the Nations* (London, 1962), pp. 8f; A. Alt, 'Die Deutung der Weltgeschichte im Alten Testament', *ZTK*, 56 (1959), 129f; R. Davidson, 'Universalism in Second Isaiah', *SJT*, 16 (1963), 166f; K. G. Kuhn, 'Das Problem der Mission in der Urchristenheit', *EMZ*, 11 (1954), 163f.

² Matthew has antithetic parallelism and Luke an adverbial clause and parataxis.

³ Jeremias, *Promise*, pp. 55f. We do not assume, as Jeremias often does, that the presence of Aramaisms or Semitic structure in a saying means that we are dealing with the *ipsissima vox Jesu*. Clearly they could be the creation of the Aramaic-speaking Church. However, such arguments can be used as a tool – one of the few objective ones we have – for hinting at the reliability of a passage. ⁴ IV Ezr. 7: 38; *S.B.*, II, pp. 228f.

⁵ H. A. Guy, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Last Things* (London, 1948), p. 47; H. Sharman, *Son of Man and Kingdom of God* (London, 1944), p. 128.

⁶ Hahn, *Mission*, p. 34 n. 2.

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although it is true that there is evidence for speaking of realised eschatology in Jesus' teaching, this cannot justify Hahn's combination and confusion of present and future aspects. That they can be combined is true, but future references remain future references. The reference in this verse is clearly to a future apocalyptic event.¹ This is shown by the presence of the patriarchs, the irrevocable judgement on the sons of the kingdom, the future tenses of the verbs, and the traditional apocalyptic themes of the Messianic banquet and the outer darkness.

We note in conclusion the following points: the privileged position of Israel is challenged; the Gentiles will definitely be included in the kingdom; and the reference is unequivocally to an apocalyptic as against a historical future.

Similar ideas, with some variations, are to be found in several other passages. First, the woes on the Galilean towns (Matt. 11: 20–4, 10: 15; Lk. 10: 13–15, 10: 12). There are no convincing grounds for regarding these words as unauthentic.² In the milieu of first-century Palestine they are particularly striking, since in the Old Testament Tyre and Sidon were seen as the epitome of heathen sin and pride (Ezek. 26–8) and Sodom and Gomorrah as the scene of the vilest heathen practices (Gen. 13–18). The reference is explicitly to an eschatological future, the day of Judgement. The exact implication for the fate of these Gentile towns is not clear, since all that is said is that they will fare better than those who refuse Jesus, which is not saying much!

Second, there is the saying about the sign of Jonah (Mk 8: 11–12; Matt. 12: 38–42; Lk. 11: 29–32). The original form of this saying is probably to be found in Matt. 12: 39, Lk. 11: 29, and the point of comparison between Jesus and Jonah is best interpreted as referring to their preaching of repentance in the face of impending doom.³ But whichever version and interpreta-

¹ Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 55; W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment* (London, 1961), p. 85.

² Despite R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford, 1963), p. 112.

³ Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 68; and similarly H. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (London, 1965), p. 53; Hahn, *Mission*, p. 36; Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 50; V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (London, 1952), pp. 361–3; T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London, 1950), p. 90. For other views see the discussion in Kümmel, *ibid.*; A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (London, 1964), pp. 134f.

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tion is taken as original, there is nothing to justify the suggestion that the point of comparison between Jesus and Jonah is that they both preached to the Gentiles.¹ For even if we claim that Jesus foresaw a Gentile mission, there is no evidence that he preached to the Gentiles. Jesus as the preacher of judgement is the sign and not Jesus as the preacher to the Gentiles. The only reference to the Gentiles, therefore, is in the statement that they will judge the Jews – another startling, direct reversal of Jewish expectation.

Third, there is the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25: 31–46). Most of the objections to the authenticity of this parable,² even if sustained, in fact reveal no more than that there has been a certain amount of linguistic and christological recasting by Matthew; they do not affect the substance of the parable. It is the identification of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (v. 32) and τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων (v. 40, 45) which concerns us. The latter phrase is particularly obscure: ἀδελφός, when used figuratively, refers either to the disciples (Matt. 28: 10; Mk 3: 33 pars.) or to fellow Israelites (Matt. 5: 22f, 7: 3f, 18: 35; cf. Gen. 9: 5; Lev. 19: 15); but it is at any rate probably an addition in v. 40, since it is lacking in v. 45. No other Synoptic passage uses ἐλάχιστος to describe people, but it probably refers to all those in need rather than to a more exclusive group like the disciples.³ The phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη refers either to the Gentiles,⁴ or to all peoples,⁵ rather than to Christians.⁶ The time reference of the parable is wholly futuristic and while there is a positive hope for some Gentiles there is a negative judgement in store for some of them. According to the parable, the Gentiles will be judged on the assumption that they have not heard the gospel, since they are unaware that they are acting for or against Jesus. This suggests that Jesus did not foresee a historical Gentile mission.

¹ C. J. Cadoux, *The Historical Mission of Jesus* (London, 1943), p. 153.

² Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 124.

³ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, 1963), p. 206; F. V. Filson, *The Gospel according to St Matthew* (London, 1960), p. 267; T. Preiss, *Life in Christ* (London, 1954), p. 52.

⁴ Jeremias, *Parables*, pp. 206, 209. Cf. Matt. 6: 32, 10: 5, 20: 19.

⁵ G. Bornkamm, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London, 1963), pp. 23–4. Cf. Matt. 24: 9, 14, 28: 19.

⁶ Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 94.

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There are other passages where a reference to the Gentiles is possible but not probable. In each case, if the reference is allowed, it is fully in accord with the material already discussed. The first of these is the parable of the lamp, a parable which the evangelists interpret differently probably because they did not know its original setting (Mk 4: 21; Matt. 5: 15; Lk. 8: 16, 11: 33f). Both T. W. Manson and J. Jeremias see a reference to the Gentiles – Manson through the use of Is. 42: 6 and Jeremias through the idea of God's eschatological light shining forth from Zion, which is a call to the nations to come.¹ However, the link with Is. 42: 6 is only through the one word 'light', and there is no evidence that *λύχνος* was exclusively an eschatological term for Jesus or that he would have connected it with the Gentiles. If there is a reference to the Gentiles, then it is to their inclusion in the future kingdom of God.

Manson and Jeremias also see a reference to the Gentiles in the parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4: 30–2 pars.) in the reference to birds, since in Jewish literature birds can mean Gentiles (Ps. 104: 2; I En. 90: 33) and in the eschatological term *κατασκηνοῦν*, which is sometimes used of Gentiles seeking refuge in the city of God (Joseph and Aseneth, 15).² However both of these arguments are extremely tenuous, especially the latter, and it is unlikely that Jesus would have expected his audience to pick up such obscure references. We can only say, with C. H. Dodd,³ that 'maybe the Gentiles are included too', and note that if they are, the time reference is to the future kingdom of God.

A further parable in which a reference to the Gentiles has been seen is that of the marriage feast (Matt. 22: 1–10; Lk. 14: 16–24). F. Hahn notes that while there is no direct reference to the Gentiles, nevertheless, since all the traditional barriers are broken down, 'the Church has with good reason related the text to the mission'.⁴ D. Bosch wants to go further, and he gives an analysis of the details of the parable in terms of Jesus' prediction of the exact development of mission in the early Church.⁵ If one

¹ Manson, *Sayings*, pp. 92–3; Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 67.

² Manson, *Sayings*, p. 123; Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 68.

³ C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London, 1961, 2nd ed.), p. 191.

⁴ Hahn, *Mission*, pp. 35–6.

⁵ Bosch, *Heidenmission*, pp. 124f.

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accepted his interpretation, however, one could only conclude that the Church's experience has so coloured the narrative that Jesus' original meaning has been lost. If, as is just possible, Jesus did refer to the Gentiles, we would suggest that it was along the lines of Matt. 8: 11–12, namely as part of his teaching about the Messianic banquet.

Another group of sayings which are relevant to this theme are those in which a universal statement is made, but without any specific mention of the Gentiles (Mk 10: 45, 12: 9, 14: 24 pars.). The authenticity of each saying has been questioned with a certain amount of plausibility, but for the sake of argument we shall use them as genuine sayings of Jesus to see what, if they are authentic, they tell us about his attitude towards the Gentiles.¹ The crucial phrase in each verse is left undefined by Mark, but appears to include a reference to the Gentiles.² In

¹ Mk 12: 9b is most suspect, since Jesus' answer (v. 9b) to his own question (v. 9a) is a phenomenon unparalleled in the Gospels (Dodd, *Parables*, pp. 94–5; Jeremias, *Parables*, pp. 71–2). It does not, as Dodd thinks, merely state the obvious, since the only obvious answer is that the wicked servants would be condemned. The alteration of Mk 12: 8 in Matt. 21: 39, Lk. 20: 15 (cf. Heb. 13: 12) and the reference to the 'beloved son' are secondary. But the arguments for regarding the whole parable as a creation of the early Church are not compelling: see Bultmann, *Tradition*, pp. 177, 205; Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 83; E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, (Göttingen, 1951), p. 244. It is particularly odd that the same authors complain on the one hand that the parable is too close to the actual events (i.e. of Jesus' death), and on the other hand that it is too far from them (i.e. in the parable the wicked servants are punished for the death of the son, whereas in the Gospels the Jews are punished because they reject, and not because they murder, God's son). Mark 10: 45 is sometimes seen as a dogmatic construct of the Church (Bultmann, *Tradition*, pp. 148f; Tödt, *Son of Man*, pp. 206–8) but the reasons given are not compelling. Mark 14: 24 may well not preserve the original form of the cup saying (cf. Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 73f, and G. Bornkamm, 'Herrenmahl und Kirche bei Paulus', *ZTK*, 53 (1956), 327f, who argue for the originality of I Cor. 11: 25), although J. Jeremias has argued in great detail for its originality (*The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London, 1966), pp. 160f).

² Since Mk 12: 2f seem to refer to the Jews as a whole (cf. Is. 5: 1–2), it is unlikely that the ἄλλοι are the poor (Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 76) or the Twelve (Dodd, *Parables*, p. 97). The reference seems to be to the Gentiles. Jeremias, *Words*, pp. 179f, has argued convincingly that πολλοί reflects a Semitism which can mean 'all' as well as 'many' and that the former meaning is intended here. If we take πολλοί to mean 'all' then it would naturally include the Gentiles. For further discussion see C. K. Barrett, 'The background of Mk 10: 45', *NTE*, pp. 2f.

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each case the universal reference is linked closely with Jesus' death and will come into effect only after this event.¹

The key, we would suggest, which best opens for us the temporal reference of these verses is Mk 14: 25, since as we have seen all these passages have a similar type of universal reference – undefined and connected with Jesus' death – and Mk 14: 25 is linked closely with one of them. Assuming that Mk 14: 25 is the original form of this logion,² we must try to discover the exact future reference of this vow.³ A. Schweitzer claims that because Jesus expected the Messianic era to be forced in by his death, he also expected to eat the Messianic meal with his disciples on the first Easter Sunday.⁴ W. G. Kümmel is more cautious and suggests that although the limitation of the vow implies a near End, one cannot say exactly how near.⁵ Whichever of these interpretations is correct, but accepting that if any interval is expected it is to be a short one, this verse has important repercussions for the sayings concerning the πολλοί. For example, R. Liechtenhahn thinks Mk 14: 24 signifies the hour when the Gentile mission was born, in that now the proclamation to the Gentiles, in a historical sense, can begin.⁶ D. Bosch, while not agreeing with Liechtenhahn, treats Jesus' death as one of the necessary presuppositions (the others are the Resurrection and Pentecost) for the apostolic proclamation to the Gentiles.⁷ However, both of these views are ruled out by our

¹ That is, taking as original in the parable in Mk 12: 1–9 a reference to three servants, the third, who is killed, being Jesus himself.

² Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 30; Jeremias, *Words*, pp. 160f.

³ Jeremias, *Words*, pp. 207f, has argued convincingly that this is a vow. He thinks that Jesus did not drink from the cup, but even if he did the saying could still be a vow.

⁴ A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London, 1954), pp. 377–8, 318.

⁵ Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 32; Jeremias, *Words*, pp. 216f. As examples of other, less convincing interpretations see C. E. B. Cranfield, *St Mark* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 428, who sees a reference to the time between the Resurrection and the Ascension; Bosch, *Heidenmission*, pp. 178–82, who refers it to the time between the Resurrection and the Parousia, when the Apostles have the task of reaching the 'many' through common participation in the Lord's supper; and Dodd, *Parables*, p. 56, who removes the imminent reference by taking 'new' to mean 'a new sort of wine', namely the heavenly wine which Jesus will drink.

⁶ R. Liechtenhahn, *Die urchristliche Mission. Voraussetzungen, Motive und Methoden* (Zürich, 1946), p. 40. ⁷ Bosch, *Heidenmission*, p. 178.

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interpretation and use of Mk 14: 25. Our own conclusions from Mk 10: 45, 14: 24–5, and 12: 9 can be summarised as follows:

(a) There is some form of universalistic reference in each verse, but it is undefined and inexact.

(b) This reference is connected with Jesus' understanding of his own death and is to be effected after it.¹

(c) There is no reference to a historical proclamation to the Gentiles.

(d) The time reference we do have seems to show that Jesus expected the Parousia immediately or very soon after his death. Thus Jesus' death and its significance for the πολλοί is linked with the imminent kingdom, which rules out any notion of a universal, historical proclamation to the Gentiles.

So far we have dealt only with the sayings of Jesus, but we must now go on to consider the significance of his actions which affect the Gentiles. As representative of this class of material we shall look in detail at the story of the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7: 24–30; Matt. 15: 21–8). We shall take the narrative basically as it stands, accepting that the interweaving of dialogue and healing is an integral part of the original.² Apart from Mk 7: 27a, Mark's version appears to be the more original of the two.³ The phrase Ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα in Mk 7: 27a is considered by many scholars to be a later addition which softens Jesus' reply, since the πρῶτον implies a δεύτερον

¹ M. Kiddle, 'The death of Jesus and the admission of the Gentiles in St Mark', *JTS*, 35 (1934), 45f.

² Bultmann, *Tradition*, pp. 38f, and Lohmeyer, *Markus*, pp. 144f, think that the original version was a simple conversation piece which was later attached to a healing narrative. However, see Hahn, *Mission*, p. 32.

³ Hahn, *Mission*, p. 32; J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Göttingen, 1949), pp. 107–8. The reasons are that in Matthew's version: vv. 22–4 are an editorial insertion (cf. Matt. 9: 27, 20: 30); the request (v. 25) is transposed; v. 27 gives a subtle change of emphasis from Mk 7: 28, for even though the children take precedence, child and dog are united under one master, who is responsible for both; the answer (v. 28) is formularised; the scene is set in a street and not in a house, reflecting the fact that Gentiles were not allowed in Jewish houses; v. 24 is similar to other Matthean material (10: 5–6) and both excludes a possible misinterpretation of Mark's version and gives Matthew's own interpretation of Jesus' words; and the woman's faith is emphasised even more than in Mark, which is a common feature of Matthean miracle stories – see H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London, 1963), pp. 165f.

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and reflects a notion akin to Rom. 1: 16, 2: 9; Acts 3: 26.¹ The Jews' priority thus becomes a temporary rather than a permanent right. But even if it is not a later addition, it does not follow that Jesus understood it in the same way as Luke and Paul. He need not have thought of it as working out in terms of a historical mission to both Jews and Gentiles. The diminutive form *κυνάριον* (Mk 7: 27; Matt. 15: 26) is thought by some to refer to household rather than street dogs and is therefore considered to be a softening of Jesus' reply which either originated with Jesus or was added later by the evangelists.² D. Bosch thinks it is particularly important since Matthew, who is not following Mark at this point, also has it.³ But if, as seems more likely, Matthew is following Mark here, then it may not be significant, since Mark is fond of using diminutive forms; and, as Jeremias notes, Aramaic has no diminutive form for dog.⁴ Moreover, if Mark has given the correct setting for the narrative – in a house – then the diminutive form may simply have been the most natural term for him to use in describing household dogs. Nothing can therefore be built on the use of this diminutive form.⁵

How then are we to interpret this healing of a Gentile? F. Spitta thought that the fact that the woman was a Gentile played no part at all in Jesus' action. Originally, Jesus and his disciples were sitting in a house eating a meal, when along came a woman who asked for her daughter to be healed. Jesus said that first his disciples must be fed and the crumbs thrown to the dogs before they could come with her. She replies that this is not necessary – a simple word from Jesus will suffice.⁶ Spitta's view scarcely needs refuting; suffice it to say that if this was to be our

¹ E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium* (Tübingen, 1926), p. 82; Munck, *Paul*, p. 261; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, pp. 144f; Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 29. Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 246, agrees that Mark added it, but thinks he hit on Jesus' meaning. Bosch, *Heidenmission*, pp. 98–9, thinks Mk 7: 27a is original because Matt. 15: 24 is to be interpreted by the notion 'Jew first then Greek' and so means the same as Mk 7: 27a, and because the woman's reply is inexplicable without v. 27a. However, the former argument is based on a false interpretation of Matt. 15: 24 and the latter simply not true.

² Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 29; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 248.

³ Bosch, *Heidenmission*, p. 99. ⁴ Jeremias, *Promise*, p. 29.

⁵ E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu* (Berlin, 1966), p. 275.

⁶ F. Spitta, *Jesus und die Heidenmission* (Giessen, 1909), pp. 41–9.