

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

*DID CHRIST CONTEMPLATE THE ADMISSION
OF THE GENTILES INTO THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN?*

PROFESSOR HARNACK has touched on this question in three of his more recent publications, viz., those on *Luke the Physician*, on *The Acts of the Apostles*, and on *The Expansion of Christianity*. In the two former he has, in opposition to the attacks of the Tübingen school of critics, successfully vindicated for St. Luke the authorship of the two canonical books ascribed to him, and has further proved that, with some few omissions, they may be accepted as trustworthy historical documents. In the Preface to his book on the Acts (p. xxvi.) he has defined his own position on the subject and has also characterized the method of his opponents in the following words: "In the first part of the Acts we find an open acknowledgment of the fact that not only was there no mission to the Gentiles in existence, but that at first no one had even thought of such a mission, and that it was only through a slow process of development that this mission was prepared for and established." "The longer I study the work of St. Luke, the more I am astonished that this fact has not forced his critics to treat him with more respect. Not a few of them treat their own conceits in regard to the book with more respect than the great lines of the work, which they either take as a matter of course, or criticize from the standpoint of their own superior knowledge." Compare also p. 42, "In an age wherein critical hypotheses, once upon a time not unfruitful, have hardened into dogmas, and when, if an attempt is made to defend a book against preju-

dice, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation, scornful remarks are made about 'special pleading,' it is not superfluous to declare that the method which is here employed by me is influenced by no prepossession of any kind."¹

I am glad to see that the English Translator, who, as he tells us in his preface, had long been of opinion that, "from the standpoint of scientific historical criticism, it was inconceivable that the author of the Lukan writings could have been a companion of St. Paul," has now been converted by Harnack's argument, founded in part, as he himself confesses, on the researches of English scholars, especially Dr. Hobart, Sir W. M. Ramsay, and Sir John Hawkins. For my own part, while I rejoice to acknowledge the many obligations of English scholars to Professor Harnack, while I find his writings in the highest degree stimulating and suggestive, I cannot go quite so far as his translator in looking upon him as a pure embodiment of the scientific spirit. As I have said in my Introduction to the Seventh Book of the *Stromateis* of Clement and also in my Introduction to the Epistle of St. James, Harnack seems to me to be not entirely free from the faults which he condemns in the Tübingen school, and I think traces of these are to be found in his manner of dealing with the question which I have put at the head of this paper, and which he appears to answer in the negative in his book on the Acts (Eng. trans. Pref. p. xxvii.). He there says: "St Luke was the first to raise the question, 'How is it that within the Christian movement, originally Jewish, there arose a mission to the Gentiles?' Who else in the early Church except St. Luke even proposed this problem? And, when it was proposed, who (except St. Luke) has treated

¹ If we may judge from the references given in the notes, the writers whom Harnack has chiefly in his mind would seem to be Jülicher, Wellhausen, Pfeiderer and J. Weiss.

it otherwise than dogmatically, with *the worthless and absolutely fallacious explanation that the mission to the Gentiles was already foretold in the Old Testament, and had moreover been expressly enjoined by our Lord?*¹ What other idea than this do we learn from St. Matthew and St. Mark?"?

I cannot see how this statement admits of any other interpretation than the following: Jesus never enjoined His disciples to preach the gospel to the Gentiles: the mission to the Gentiles is not foretold in the Old Testament: the contrary belief may have been maintained by the first two Evangelists, but it was never sanctioned by St. Luke. How are we to reconcile this with Harnack's own language in page xxi., "To demonstrate the power of the Spirit of Jesus in the Apostles—this was the general theme of St. Luke." "This fact, therefore, viz., the Expansion of the Gospel, could not but come to the front as the leading idea which was to give form to the whole. At the very beginning of the work it is most distinctly proclaimed, 'Ye will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.'"

For the present I postpone what I have to say as to the universalistic teaching of our Lord, to which St. Luke, along with the other Synoptists, bears witness in his Gospel. I confine myself here to the prophetic references to be found in the Acts. In Acts ii. 17 we read the prophecy of Joel, "I will pour out my Spirit *upon all flesh*, and it shall be that *whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*," a passage which is also quoted by St. Paul in Romans x. 13, to justify his mission to the Greeks. In the same chapter (ver. 39) the words, "To you is the promise, and to your children, and *to all that are afar off*, as many as the Lord our God shall call," remind us of Isaiah lvii. 19 and Joel ii. 32. In Acts iii.

¹ The italics are my own.

26, after quoting the promise to Abraham that "in him all the families of the earth should be blessed," St. Peter continues, "Unto you *first* God sent his servant to bless you"; where the use of the word "first" must surely imply that *subsequently* the promise will be fulfilled for all the other families of the earth. Compare St. Paul's words addressed to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 46), "It was necessary that the word of God should *first* be spoken to you, but seeing . . . ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." In Acts x. 43 St. Peter is confirmed in his belief, that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him," by "the witness of all the prophets, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." So (in Acts xv. 22) St. James decides the question of the admission of the Gentiles into the Church by referring to Amos ii. 11, "I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen . . . *that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord.*" So St. Paul in the Pisidian Antioch justifies his turning from the Jews to the Gentiles by the command of the Lord given in Isaiah xlix. 6, "I have set thee for *a light of the Gentiles*, that thou shouldst be for salvation *to the uttermost parts of the earth,*" a quotation which becomes even more appropriate when we recall the preceding words of the prophet, "It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles."

It is not true, then, that St. Luke denies, or even that he ignores, the prophetic announcement of the evangelization of the world. On the contrary, he testifies that that announcement was appealed to alike by St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James, as justifying the reception of the Gentiles into the Christian Church. But what strikes me as even more sur-

prising than this, is that any one who had read with any sort of care the Prophets, or the Psalms, or even the first two books of the Pentateuch, could persuade himself that "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did *not* testify to the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow." Among the most prominent of these glories was that foretold to Abraham, that "in him all families of the earth should be blessed." We find this prophecy further developed in such words as those of the Psalmist: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof"; "All the ends of the earth shall worship before him, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he shall be governor among the nations"; "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come; thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are far off upon the seas"; "The princes of the nations have gathered together to be a people of the God of Abraham"; "The Lord hath made known his salvation, his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen"; "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works"; "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." It would be easy to fill this paper with similar quotations from the Prophets, but I will content myself with one or two examples. Isaiah speaks (ii. 2-4) of "all nations going up to the house of the Lord, that they may be taught his ways and walk in his paths." He also particularizes certain nations as predestined partners in the blessing of Israel (ix. 24): "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth," which we may compare with Psalm lxxxvii., where Rahab and Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia are claimed as adopted citizens of Zion, nations to whom has been revealed the knowledge of God.

But, instead of dwelling on particular texts, let us try to picture to ourselves the total impression which the study of

the Old Testament would be likely to leave on the Jewish mind, say in the first century B.C., as regards the question of the future of the Gentile world. Three views might be taken: (1) They are enemies of God and of His people, doomed to be exterminated like the Canaanites and Amalekites; (2) They stand in no relation to God, and are merely to be exploited for the benefit of Israel; (3) They are God's children, made in His likeness, and the duty and glory of Israel is to impart to them the revelation of God, made to themselves. There can be no doubt that the third view is that which progressively manifests itself in the reading of the Bible. If we go back to the beginning, we find it thrice stated in the early chapters of Genesis that man, as man, was made in the image of God; and in the third passage (ix. 6) this fact is given as a proof of the preciousness of man's life in the sight of God. It is assumed in the earliest history that other nations are under the Divine government, knowing the difference between right and wrong and punished and rewarded accordingly. Abraham is a friend of Ephron the Hittite, and receives blessing from Melchizedek. In his prayer for Sodom he declares his belief that the Judge of all the earth will do right. Balaam is the mouthpiece of God's blessings to Israel, and is quoted by the prophet Micah as declaring in brief the whole duty of man. A mixed multitude come up from Egypt and are admitted, virtually as proselytes, to a share in the blessing of Israel. So Rahab, Ruth, Araunah the Jebusite, the widow of Zarephath, Naaman the Syrian, are all brought into more or less close communion with the chosen people. Jeremiah speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as the Lord's servant, and, in Isaiah, we read, "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus"; and again, "Cyrus is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure." The prophets have a burden and a blessing for Moab and the neighbouring nations, just as they have for Israel. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of the Divine

care for Gentiles is the sending of Jonah to Nineveh to warn them of impending destruction, and the severe rebuke received by the prophet when he murmured at the remission of the punishment on the repentance of the offenders: "Should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle?"

A great step forward was taken when it was announced that a descendant of David should be the Messiah, the Anointed King who should rule all nations in righteousness and peace. Isaiah finds it impossible to speak too highly of His greatness, His wisdom, and His goodness. The largest hopes, the highest ideals, not merely of Israel, but of all mankind, were centred in Him. Daniel describes his kingdom as being established for ever on the ruin of the four great worldly monarchies.¹

Turn now to the realization of these promises, when the fulness of time was come. We know that there was great agitation among the Jews during the half century which preceded the birth of Christ. The Gentile yoke pressed hard upon them, and many insurrections were excited by the hope of the speedy coming of the promised Deliverer. St. Luke tells us of quieter and gentler spirits which were awaiting the consolation and redemption of Israel. Harnack, however, forbids the use of the early chapters of Matthew and Luke, so we will make our beginning with the preaching of John the Baptist. There can be no doubt that John announced himself as the forerunner of the Messiah, and that his way of preparing for the Messiah's coming and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven was by the preaching of repentance. He warned his hearers that descent from Abraham was of no avail. "God could raise up children to

¹ Compare, on the extension of the idea of the Messiah, Harnack: *What is Christianity?* pp. 132 foll.

Abraham out of these stones." St. Luke adds that he quoted the words of Isaiah (lii. 10), "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." He recognized Jesus as the Messiah, one mightier than himself, who should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. In the sermon on the Mount we have the programme or the epitome of the Messiah's teaching, of which we are told that it startled the people by its tone of authority. While professing, not to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets, He made it evident that *His* fulfilment would be the destruction, not merely of much that was held sacred by the religious teachers of the time, but of the actual laws of Moses: "Ye have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; but I say unto you, 'Resist not him that is evil';" "Ye have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy'; but I say unto you, 'Love your enemies.'" In another passage (Matt. xix. 4) the command of Moses with regard to divorce is set aside, on the ground that it was a mere concession to the hardness of men's hearts, and contradicted the primal law of marriage. In everything Christ winds up to a higher pitch the moral and spiritual teaching of the Old Testament, finding, for instance, the doctrine of immortality underlying the phrase, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"; while at the same time He treats with scant respect the details of ceremonial, the superstitious observance of the Sabbath, the distinction of clean and unclean meats, and the necessity of frequent ablutions. Compare the words, "Whatever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him"; on which St. Mark observes, "This he said, making all meats clean." Scarcely less important than the Sermon on the Mount, as striking the keynote of our Lord's mission, was His appearance in the synagogue at Nazareth, when He spoke of the prophecy in Isaiah lxi. 1 as being that day fulfilled in their ears. We may compare this with His answer to the disciples

of the Baptist, when they came to ask whether He were in truth the Messiah, or whether they were to look for another, upon which He again quotes from the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah as evidence of His mission. Especially remarkable are the words addressed to the people of Nazareth, in which He reminded them how there were many widows and many lepers in Israel in the days of Elijah and Elisha, but to none of them was the prophet sent but to the widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon, and to Naaman the Syrian. It is possible that the furious animosity aroused among His own fellow-citizens by this reference to the evangelization of the Gentiles may have led Him to the conclusion that the time was not yet ripe for the avowed carrying out of what He must always have felt to be an essential, if not the most essential, part of His work on earth. But if He could not immediately attack this stronghold of Jewish prejudice and intolerance, He could at least prepare the way for its overthrow by manifesting His sympathy for those among the chosen people who were looked upon with hardly less scorn than the Gentiles themselves by the Pharisees. He showed Himself the friend of publicans and sinners, and declared that He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, that the publicans and harlots were nearer to the kingdom of God than the self-righteous Pharisees. In like manner a Samaritan is praised by Him because he alone, of the ten lepers who were cleansed, turned back to give glory to God ; and when He would give an example of neighbourly conduct, He chooses a Samaritan in preference to the priest and the Levite. Nay, He goes further, and when the Roman centurion declared himself unworthy to ask that the Lord should come under his roof to heal his servant, feeling sure that heavenly ministers waited upon His word, Jesus commended him beyond all others : "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." A similar comparison is made between the heathen under the old dis-

pensation and those to whom the Gospel had been vainly offered under the new : " It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you " ; " The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here. " So, in more general terms, it is said, " Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven ; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness. " Many of the parables teach the lesson which is appended to the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in Matthew xxi. 43 : " The kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. " Two things above all else are characteristic of the Saviour : the absolute freedom of His call, and the denunciation of those who would limit that freedom.

We will consider now what Harnack has to allege against the testimony of the Synoptists here cited in proof that the mission to the heathen was always in the mind of our Lord. Even if we had no such evidence, it would have been impossible to believe that One who represented and embodied the highest ideal of the Old Testament—and this is what we understand by the Messiah—could have been content to limit His love and His care for mankind as a whole to a small fraction of humanity. One who could have done so would have been no Messiah. Prophets and Psalmists and Patriarchs alike would have repudiated him as a pretender. On what ground, then, does Harnack venture to defend so glaring a paradox ? In the first place he takes no account of the testimony of the fourth Evangelist ; and he excludes the testimony of St. Luke, though in the quotation given from his own treatise on the Acts at the beginning of this Essay, he imputes to the writer of the Acts the acknowledgment, not only that no such mission was in existence at the opening

of his history, but that no one had even dreamt of such a mission at that time. But if that was indeed the attitude of St. Luke, what reason had Harnack to deny him a place in our discussion? It would seem, however, that even the first two Evangelists are not to be altogether trusted; at least, this is what we gather from the language used in the *Expansion of Christianity*, p. 38: "If we leave out of account the words which the first Evangelist puts into the mouth of the Risen Jesus (Matt. xxviii. 19), with the similar expressions in the unauthentic appendix to Mark; and if we further set aside the story of the Magi, as well as one or two of the Old Testament quotations, which the first Evangelist has woven into his tale (in iv. 13 f. and xii. 18), we must admit that Mark and Matthew have almost consistently withstood the temptation to introduce the Gentile mission into the words and deeds of Jesus." "Only twice does Mark make Jesus allude to the gospel being preached in all lands (xiii. 10, xiv. 9)." "Matthew expressly limits the mission of the Twelve to Palestine (x. 5, 6), precluding the hypothesis that the words applied merely to a provisional mission. If the saying in x. 23 is genuine ('Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come'), the Gentile mission cannot have lain within the horizon of Jesus." "The story of the Syro-Phœnician woman is almost of greater significance. The exception proves the rule." "It is impossible and quite useless to argue with those who see an inadmissible bias in the refusal to accept traditions about Jesus instructing His disciples after His death" (p. 41).

It must be allowed that Harnack here brings forward two facts which seem to support his hypothesis, that the evangelization of the Gentiles was not contemplated by our Lord while He was upon earth. These are His charge to the Twelve before their mission, and His way of dealing with the Syro-Phœnician woman. The words bearing upon this

point, in the charge, as given by St. Matthew, are, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans, but go *rather* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" It will help us to understand this charge if we observe the context in which it is placed by St. Mark and by St. Matthew. The former connects it with the visit to the synagogue at Nazareth; and tells us (vi. 6) that Jesus marvelled at the unbelief of the Nazarenes. I have suggested above that their unwillingness to admit the thought of the Gentiles sharing in the privileges of the Jews may have led Jesus to the conclusion that it was not yet the Father's will that this should be publicly announced. In St. Matthew the charge follows immediately upon our Lord's bidding the disciples to "pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers into his harvest, seeing that the harvest was plentiful, and the labourers few." It was impossible to send out labourers at once into all the world. It was necessary to begin somewhere; and it was well to begin with those who had some knowledge of the subject, and could be soonest fitted to become preachers to others. That no absolute prohibition of the evangelization of the Gentiles was intended, is shown by the use of the comparative "rather," "Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." And the pressing nature of the work is signified by the words which follow (v. 23): "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Judah till the Son of Man be come,"—come, that is, to punish those who refused to listen to the call; for such shall be punished even more severely than Sodom and Gomorrah (Mark vi. 11).

I pass on now to the story of the Syro-Phœnician woman, which is perhaps best regarded as an object-lesson given to the disciples. The first question suggested by the story is, Why should she have been treated so differently from the centurion, who was also a Gentile? The answer is that she was not only Gentile, but heathen, *Ἑλληνίς*, as she is

called by St. Mark ; while the centurion was in all probability a proselyte, strongly recommended by the Jews, whose gratitude he had earned by building them a synagogue. When Jesus made no answer to her entreaty that He would heal her daughter, the disciples, who, no doubt, considered themselves still bound by the charge given to them, impatiently urged Him to send her away, that they might be no longer wearied with her cries¹ ; and Jesus Himself seemed to grant their request by enunciating the principle He had already laid down (Matt. x. 6), " I was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." When she knelt before Him, praying, " Lord, help me," He still persisted in the grave irony of His refusal : " It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs," thus drawing forth the answer of faith, " Yea, Lord ; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table," which was to convince even the disciples, and which enabled their Master to pronounce that the devil had already gone out from her daughter.

Setting aside the two facts we have just been considering, Harnack's objections seem to me to rest upon dogmatic assumptions not unlike those which he condemns in the Tübingen critics. He declares that he is not influenced by prepossessions of any kind ; yet what is it but prepossession which restrains him from even considering the statement made in Acts i. 3 that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after His passion, speaking to them the things concerning the Kingdom of God ? The preceding part of Gospel history makes it clear enough how much they had to learn before they were capable of entering into their Master's ideas, and what need they had of moral strengthening before they could face the opposition of the Jews. We should all agree with

¹ Compare for similar behaviour Matt. xix. 13, where they find fault with those that brought little children to Jesus ; and their request that He would send away the multitude before the miracle of the loaves and fishes (Mark vi. 36), also the attempt made to silence Bartimæus (Mark x. 46).

Harnack that this strengthening and this learning came from the spirit of Christ within them, but the Gospel of the Resurrection shows us how, even before the Day of Pentecost, they were in process of receiving the first from their conviction that He who died upon the Cross had risen again as their Saviour and their King; and the second from the words He spoke to them before His final departure from earth. It is just this interval between the Easter morning and the Ascension which makes possible that *Expansion of Christianity*, of which Harnack has written so well. Is he really prepared to abandon as apocryphal the visit of the two disciples to Emmaus, the appearances to Mary Magdalene and Thomas, and the threefold commission, blotting out the threefold denial? If these things were not really so, where shall we find the man who was capable of inventing them? The strange thing is that Harnack, who accepts so much, and tells us "Whatever may have happened at the grave and in the matter of the appearances, one thing is certain: *This grave was the birthplace of the indestructible belief that death is vanquished, that there is a life eternal,*"¹ should be staggered at so little. It was not the visit to the empty tomb that gave birth to that belief. The women who were first there fled from it, "for trembling and astonishment had come upon them and they were afraid." It was not the tomb, not the vision of angels, not even the apparition of Jesus Himself, so changed and so mysterious; but the words which He uttered that made them feel that their Lord was still with them, and would be with them always, the same yet not the same.² If Christ is the first-fruits; if we, like Him, are to be raised again in a spiritual body, why should we find it hard to believe that He could hold communion with His friends after His return to earth? What is there contrary to reason in the idea that the action of

¹ The italics are Harnack's.

² See this truth admirably illustrated in Dr. Abbott's *Philochristus*.

spirit on spirit would be interpreted in terms of the material body by those who were still immersed in flesh ? It was so at least in the vision of St. Paul, which had so deep an influence on his life. Yet the words which had such mighty power over him were unheard by others. I do not suppose that in our present state we are capable of arriving at any certain conclusion as to the actual manner in which our Lord communicated with His disciples after the resurrection, but even to us under our present limitations such communication does not appear inconceivable, and I see no reason for doubting that before His ascent to heaven our Lord had removed the prohibition against the evangelization of the Gentiles, and had laid down the order in which the Gospel should be preached to different communities, in the words, "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." In these words He prepared the disciples to take the further step, preaching to Samaritans, when they were driven out from Jerusalem (Acts viii. 4 foll.), and to the Gentiles, as the call came to each of the Brethren (Acts viii. 22 foll., x. and xi. 20).

JOSEPH B. MAYOR.

HISTORICAL COMMENTARY ON THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

XV. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE DEACONS.

THE rules (or rather the advice, for there is no real question of fixed regulations in the letters) about Deacons are very similar in character to those about Bishops or Elders. Corresponding to the lesser importance of the office, they are more briefly given ; but it would be a mistake to conclude too quickly that the differences are due solely to abbreviation or omission of some of the principles respecting the Bishops. The variations require to be examined in detail, and are not