Scripture

THE QUARTERLY OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION

VOLUME XIV | January 1962 | No 25

CHRISTIAN CELIBACY AND THE CROSS

In 14:26 and 18:29, St Luke adds ' a wife ' to the list of the things a disciple of Jesus must ' hate ' or ' give up ' to follow his Master. It is the purpose of this article to examine the bearing of those two small additions. We think that they open an interesting insight into the spirituality of St Luke and his understanding of Christian celibacy.[1]

I TEACHING ON CELIBACY

It is commonly granted that in both cases the ' wife ' is an addition of Luke.

In 18:29 it is almost obvious.[2] The parallel texts of Mt. 19:29 and Mk. 10:29 agree on an enumeration in which family relations, grouped by pairs in quite a Semitic manner, were clumsily inserted between house and fields, without any reference to a wife.[3] As he was wont to do, Luke touched up his model delicately. Unlike Matthew, he did not try to correct the heaviness of the grammatical construction (' there is nobody that will . . . who shall not . . .'). But he improved the sentence by removing the ' lands,' the reference to which, at the end, came as an anticlimax, and by simplifying the cumbersome

[1] This article continues a study begun in the pages of this review on the biblical doctrine of Celibacy. cf. *Scripture* 1960, pp. 97–105 ; 1961, pp. 12–20.

[2]

Mt. 19:29	Mk. 10:29–30	Lk. 18:29b–30
Everyone	There is no man	There is no man
that has left houses	that has left house	that has left house
		or wife
or brothers or sisters	or brothers or sisters	or brothers
or father or mother	or mother or father	or parents
or children or lands	or children or lands	or children
for my name's sake	for my sake	for the sake of
	and the sake of the Gospel	God's Kingdom
shall receive	who shall not receive	who shall not receive
much more.	a hundred times as much.	much more.

[3] The list is so clumsy that quite a number of MSS of Matthew, as well as Origen and Chrysostom, have corrected the text by shifting ' the lands ' to the beginning of the enumeration. A good number of MSS (among which mostly the Antiochene family) added ' a wife ' to the list of Matthew. A lesser number added it also to Mark. It is the fairly common case of harmonisation of the Synoptics. Merk has accepted the *Koinè* reading in his text of Matthew (but not in Mark). The other editions are right in rejecting it.

Semitic enumeration. Mostly, and this was more than a stylistic correction, by adding 'a wife,' he completed the list of the family bonds one has to cut in order to follow Christ.

In Lk. 14:26, a non-Markan passage, the case is different.[1] The parallel text in Mt. 10:37 is so different that the first impression is that the two Synoptists drew their material from different sources.[2] Yet it should be noticed that in the following verse the two texts are much more closely connected. If a common source is accepted for the latter, it must be accepted also for the former. In fact, the dissimilarity between the two texts of Matthew and Luke can easily be accounted for by a common source from which the two Evangelists drew independently, both diverging from it in opposite directions.[3]

Materially, it must be Luke who reflects the source better: he keeps to the Semitic way of balancing in parallel the elements of the enumeration; his simpler conclusion: 'cannot be my disciple' is very likely to be closer to the original than the more sophisticated form of Matthew: 'is not worthy of me'; the same can also surely be said of his typical semitism in the use of the verb *misein* (to hate) in the sense of not preferring.[4]

But there are indications that, though materially more faithful to his source, Luke also made his changes. In the original context, as it still stands in Matthew, the saying, a part of the missionary discourse, was a summary of Mic. 7:6, quoted to illustrate the atmosphere of eschatological crisis in which the disciple must live: the last days have come when men must take up their position in the final struggle that will establish God's Kingdom; and the decision of the disciple may cut across his family loyalties and set him in opposition to his closest relatives. In Matthew and in Micheas, the wife was not mentioned among those relatives and it must have been the same in the source. Moreover the pair 'wife-children' in Luke breaks the perfect parallelism of the enumeration: a wife cannot be set in parallelism with children, as can father and mother or brothers and sisters. We may

[1]

Mt. 10:37–8	Lk. 14:26–7
He that loves father or mother	If somebody comes to me
more than me	and does not hate his father and mother
is not worthy of me	and wife and children
and he that loves son or daughter	and brothers and sisters
more than me	and even his own soul
is not worthy of me	he cannot be my disciple
and he that does not take his cross	Whoever does not carry his cross
and follow me	and come after me
is not worthy of me.	he cannot be my disciple.

[2] cf. W. C. McAllen, *The Gospel according to St Matthew* (ICC), Edinburgh 1912, p. 110; J. M. Lagrange, *Évangile selon St Matthieu*, Paris 1948, p. 211

[3] cf. L. Vaganay, *Le Problème Synoptique*, Paris-Tournai 1954, p. 141

[4] cf. R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, Göttingen 1957, p. 173

safely suppose therefore that, following Mic. 7:6 and as the text still stands in Matthew, the source must have had ' sons and daughters ' after ' father and mother.' Luke substituted ' wife ' for ' daughter ' in order to introduce a favourite teaching of his. He made of the saying an invitation to total renouncement (cf. v. 33), suggesting that, to be perfect, the disciple should even forgo married life.

Commentators have noticed that it is typical of Luke to emphasise the requirements of the Gospel most strongly. Luke is an absolutist. ' All,' ' none,' ' everything ' are favourite words of his vocabulary.[1] Renan spoke of Ebionitic tendencies in the third Gospel. As such, this statement is an anachronism but it can be said at least, with Lagrange, that Luke's Gospel is ' the Gospel of renouncement.' [2] Renouncing wife and children is, for Luke, one of the most significant forms of that radicalism in self denial he recommended.

But what exactly does Luke mean when he speaks of ' giving up ' or ' hating ' a wife ? The fact that, in the two texts studied here, the word ' wife ' was a deliberate addition of Luke shows that in both passages Luke's idea was the same. But what was that idea ?

If the words were to be taken at their face value, it would seem, particularly in 18:19, that Luke envisages the case of a married man who abandons relatives, wife, children and belongings to devote himself entirely to the service of God's Kingdom. The general trend of the sentence seems to impose that interpretation : exactly as one is assumed to have parents and properties and is invited to abandon them for the sake of the Kingdom, Luke would also take it for granted that one has a wife and children and should be advised to leave them, with the promise of a manifold reward. There is no doubt that the idea is strange. Exegetes do not usually consider the difficulty. Yet it does exist. Luke would practically advocate something akin to the Hindu *samnyasa* ideal ; Luke's suggestion would be similar to that of the Brahmanic books according to which, after a time of married life, when man has fulfilled his duty of procreation, he is advised to retire from his family to become a *san-nyasi*, an adept of ' total abnegation,' devoting himself, in perfect continence, to his spiritual calling.

It need hardly be said that such an ideal is not biblical. For the Bible, ' man leaves father and mother to cleave to his wife ' (Gen. 2:24 ; cf. Mt. 19:5 ; Mk. 10:7), but no-one leaves his wife.[3] On the

[1] cf. J. Dupont, *Les Béatitudes*, Louvain 1954, p. 195. Dupont points out the same absolutism in 18:22 ; 5:11, 28 ; 12:33 ; Acts 2:44f. ; 4:32, 34f.

[2] *Évangile selon St Luc*, Paris 1948, p. xlv

[3] It is noticeable that when developing the theme of the superiority of God's love over family bonds, rabbinical literature also does not mention the wife among the family loyalties that must be set aside when conflicting with the service of God. The only instance, in Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* XI, 5, 4), refers to the special case of the mixed marriages at the time of Nehemias. cf. Strack-Billerbeck I, p. 587.

contrary, he who dismisses his wife is responsible for her adulteries and is himself a fornicator (Mt. 5:32 ; 19:9 ; Lk. 16:18 ; Mk. 10:11). The matrimonial union is a divine bond and nobody may loose it (Mt. 19:6 ; Mk. 10:9). Our knowledge of the life of the early Church is only fragmentary but as far as it goes it does not warrant the assertion that early Christians were advised to leave their wives for religious reasons ' except for a time, to devote themselves to prayer ' (1 Cor. 7:5). It might be argued that the apostles are said to have abandoned ' everything ' to follow Jesus (Lk. 5:11, 28 ; Mt. 19:27 ; Mk. 10:28), but apparently ' everything ' did not include their wives since afterwards they were accompanied by them in their apostolic journeys (1 Cor. 9:5).[1] The view of the early Church in that respect is clearly stated by St Paul : ' For those who are married, my instructions are—and they are not mine, they are the Lord's— : . . . the husband must not put away his wife ' (1 Cor. 7:10f., 17, 27).[2] St Paul does not know any exceptions. It would be quite surprising if Luke intended to defend or to introduce a custom so alien to biblical and apostolic tradition.

Therefore it must be concluded that Luke did not propose conjugal separation as an ideal to the disciple of Christ. The verb ' to give up ' must be taken in an analogical way. Relatives and belongings must be properly left, or put away : man has them necessarily and total detachment implies their abandon. But the case is different with a wife. Marriage is not necessary : it is a freely accepted relationship and the way to renounce it consists in not contracting it. Renouncing a wife means simply abstaining from marriage. The disciple is not invited to give up *his* wife but *a* wife, to renounce the very prospect of having one. It is the ideal of celibacy that Luke evokes by his addition in 18:29.

By analogy, the same interpretation must be extended to 14:26. There also, the meaning of the words cannot be discovered by reference to the immediate context since they do not really belong to it, but rather to Luke's views on perfect discipleship. Here too the suggestion is that the disciple should ' hate ' or scorn not his wife but married life. Plummer suggests that Luke's insertion of a wife is ' a

[1] 1 Cor. 9:5 alludes to the custom of several apostles to move about with ' a woman, a sister ' (*adelphên gunaika*). There is a certain reluctance among Catholic commentators (Ress, Callan, Ricciotti, Spicq, Prat, Osty, etc.) to see a wife in that ' woman ' (cf. the footnote in Knox ; Allo hesitates). A ' sister ' is a Christian woman (1 Cor. 7:15 ; Rom. 16:1 ; Phm. 2). If *gunê* does not mean wife, why that tautology of ' a lady Christian woman ' ? In a pagan world where scandals were many and suspicion easy, the apostles would have had enough common sense not to travel with a ' sister ' that was not their wife.

[2] The verb used by Paul for ' putting away ' is *aphienai*, exactly as in Lk. 18:29

comment, whether designed or not, on v. 20.'[1] In that verse of the parable of the Banquet, one of the guests excuses himself on the ground that he has just taken a wife and finds himself unable to come. V. 26 draws the lesson : the disciple should not place himself in that situation : he must not take a wife. Here again, ' to hate wife and children ' means to reject the idea of having them, to reject the very prospect of being entangled by them in one's effort to follow Christ till the end. The disciple scorns his family by not minding it but of course he cannot help having one. He scorns wife and children by remaining a celibate.

It might be objected to this interpretation that it supposes encratist tendencies in Luke. Celibacy seems to be considered as a necessary condition of discipleship, with the additional difficulty that, by disciples of Christ, Luke understood all Christians (cf. Ac. 6:1 ; 9:19 ; 11:26). Are we to suppose that Luke made of celibacy an indispensable requirement of Christian life ? Some allowance must be made for Luke's oratorical tendencies. A few verses afterwards (14:33), Luke says similarly that, if one does not renounce all his possessions, he cannot be a disciple. Does he mean that private property is incompatible with Christian life ? Luke knew well enough that among Jesus' followers there were Marthas who continued to live their ordinary life in the world with its material problems (Lk. 10:38–42; 8:3). True, his descriptions of the Christian communities in the Acts would leave the impression of a kind of total communism in the early days of the history of the Church (2:44f. ; 4:32, 34f.). Yet the story of Ananias makes it clear that such total dispossession of one's personal belongings was not deemed a necessary condition to enter the Church (Ac. 5:4). ' There is a strong element of generalisation in those descriptions. . . . Luke has a tendency to give an absolute ring to the requirements of self denial contained in the message of the Gospel. This tendency led him to retouch slightly but significantly the sources on which he worked to compose his Gospel.'[2] But when retouching his sources to propose celibacy so radically to Christ's disciples, Luke did not ignore the sanctity of marriage. He meant only to draw an ideal picture of the perfect disciple, well knowing that there are degrees in generosity, and there are particular circumstances that cannot always be overlooked. Of Luke's invitation to celibacy may be said what Plummer wrote of Jesus' call to self denial : ' as often, (he) states a principle in a startling way and leaves his hearers to find out the qualifications.'[3]

Luke the disciple of Paul had understood the exhortation of his master : ' I would that all men were like me (unmarried) . . . and I

[1] op. cit., p. 364 [2] J. Dupont, op. cit., pp. 195f. [3] op. cit., p. 364

say to the unmarried, it would be better for them to remain so, as I am myself' (1 Cor. 7:7f.). Luke must have remained himself a celibate as an old tradition has it.[1] By inserting in the Gospel an invitation to celibacy, he echoed the call of his master to attain perfection by perfect continence (1 Cor. 7:1).

In a way, Luke was even more accurate than Paul when he attributed that call to Jesus himself. When asked by the Corinthians how to deal with the problem of the virgins and widows, St Paul had not been able to remember any decision of Christ on that topic (1 Cor. 7:25). Luke the Evangelist knew better the sayings of the Lord. It was true that there had been no precept given by Jesus on that question, but there had been a suggestion. Luke knew that Jesus had proposed the ideal of virginity to those ' who could understand.' There had been for instance the saying on the eunuchs (Mt. 19:12). Luke had omitted it from his Gospel on account of its bluntness, for fear of offending his Gentile readers unused to the uncouth rhetoric of Israel.[2] But he could not omit the lesson. It was too important. It corresponded too well with his spirituality and his concept of perfect discipleship. The discreet allusions to celibacy which he added to the sayings on self denial were for him a way to make up for the text he had to omit for stylistic reasons.[3]

II A DAILY CROSS

Luke's minute additions to the two sayings on self denial are his rendering of the *logion* on the spiritual eunuchs. But there is more in that than a simple transposition : it is not only a matter of toning down too crude a style. The change was more than stylistic : by the fact that Luke gave a different context to Jesus' invitation to celibacy, he gave it to some extent a new meaning or at least, by giving another background, he threw a new light on its value.

In the *logion* on the eunuchs, celibacy had been given mostly an eschatological meaning[4] : ' he that could understand ' had been invited to anticipate on earth the conditions that would prevail in the imminent Kingdom. Luke knew that teaching. In 18:29 he echoed it almost literally by advising celibacy ' for the sake of God's Kingdom,' exactly as in Mt. 19:12. Yet there was already in that a change of standpoint since, for Luke, the Kingdom is rather the present order of

[1] A tradition which, according to Lagrange, goes back at least to the second century (op. cit., pp. xiv–xvii). [2] cf. *Scripture* 1961, p. 14
[3] cf. E. Osty, *L'Evangile selon St Luc* (*Bible de Jérusalem*), Paris 1948, p. 23
[4] cf. *Scripture* 1961, pp. 15ff.

things established by Christ.[1] The celibate 'for the sake of the Kingdom' is so, in Lk., not so much to anticipate the life to come, as to proclaim in a more compelling way the significance of the present period in the history of salvation. Aware that this is the time when the Kingdom of the poor has been installed (18:34), to enter which one has to dispossess oneself of any worldly hope or tie, the disciple, according to Lk. 18:29, embraces celibacy as an example of the poverty required to enter the Kingdom of the *anawim*. In the same manner the Magnificat (Lk. 1:48), to describe Mary's condition as a virgin, had used the word *tapeinôsis*, which, in the Greek Bible, is a technical term to describe the situation of the poor, deprived of human hope but, as such, God's favourite people and heirs of the Kingdom.[2]

Lk. 14:26 reveals the foundation of the doctrine by resolving the poverty of the Kingdom into the mystery of the cross. The supreme poverty is that of the cross, and celibacy is presented as a way of sharing in the utter dispossession of self which Christ realised on Calvary. The reason given for celibacy is that the disciple must carry the cross with Jesus: celibacy becomes a part of the process of mortification by which we share in the mystery and the efficacy of the cross.

When connecting renunciation of earthly ties with the necessity of carrying the cross, Luke followed his source. But, as usual, while keeping as close as possible to his source, he read it with a great originality of thought. The words were mostly those of the source, much the same as those found in the parallel text of Matthew and also in the context of the 'Markan tradition' where the same saying recurs (Mk. 8:34; Mt. 16:24; Lk. 9:23). But Luke infused into them his own deep understanding of the Christian mystery.

In the source, and preserved by Matthew and Mark, the carrying of the cross was taken in a material sense; it was understood in the sense which the Jews must have given it when they had heard Jesus utter that sentence. At that stage the cross had no mystical or symbolical connotation.[3] It was the material cross, the *patibulum* which those who had been condemned to death by the Roman regime could be frequently seen carrying to the place of their execution. The genuine authenticity of the *logion* has been suspected on the ground

[1] cf. J. M. Lagrange, op. cit., p. cxlii

[2] cf. A. Gelin, *Les Pauvres de Yahvé*, Paris 1953, pp. 121–32

[3] The cross does not seem to have been given the symbolical meaning of hardship in Palestine at the time of our Lord; old rabbinical literature never uses the phrase 'to carry the cross' in the metaphorical sense of undergoing great trials. cf. Strack-Billerbeck I, p. 587. In *Genesis rabba* 56, 36c, there is a reference to Isaac carrying the wood of the sacrifice 'as somebody who carries the cross on his shoulders.' But (against Bultmann, op. cit., p. 173*n*) there is no need to understand the allusion in a metaphorical sense.

that it is too 'Christian,' or even too 'Pauline' to belong really to Jesus' ministry; it is alleged that it supposes a theology of the cross which could not be expected of the 'historical Jesus' or at least which Jesus could not have expected of his audience.[1] But this objection is based on a misunderstanding of the *logion* in its original sense. There is no theology in it; there is nothing more than an allusion to the pitiful sight which was fairly common in any province of the Roman Empire in those days. As V. Taylor remarks: 'Death by crucifixion under the Romans was a sufficiently familiar sight in Palestine to be the basis of the saying.'[2] The logion might even have derived from a grim Zealotist slogan.[3] In the context of the Galilean ministry, it need not be supposed that Jesus, when speaking of carrying the cross, meant a mystical union with his death: 'at that stage, Jesus had not yet spoken about his passion: he could not therefore allude to his own execution.'[4] What he meant and what the Jews understood was that the disciples had to be ready to face the greatest risks, to face death and even the appalling death on the cross. This literal sense of the cross is still preserved in the context of Matthew and Mark. In Mk. 8:34 and Mt. 16:24 Christ exhorts his followers not to mind their own life. In Mt. 10:38, as we saw already, the discourse refers to the eschatological struggle: it may divide families, it may even cost the disciples their lives: they must be ready to face the prospect of having to join the frightful procession of the *furciferi* dragged across the streets to their death. In that context, the saying on severing family ties and the saying on carrying the cross do not explain each other. They are only parallel examples of the severity of the crisis through which the disciples must be ready to pass.

In Luke on the contrary, the eschatological context has disappeared. The question now concerns the obligations of discipleship. It implies total renouncement, utmost self denial. It is a life of sacrifice that can be compared to a way of the cross. The saying on detachment and the saying on the cross explain each other. The cross is not the *patibulum* that the disciple may have to shoulder; it is the mystical cross of the hardships of his life, and the sacrifices by which he unites himself with the death of his master.

That Luke understood the cross of the disciple in this mystical sense clearly appears from his rendering of the *logion* in the Markan context. As given by Matthew and Mark, the text was an invitation to martyrdom. 'Luke added the words *kat' hêmeran* to the logion: "let him

[1] cf. Loisy, *Les Evangiles Synoptiques*, I, Ceffonds 1907, p. 895

[2] *The Gospel according to St Mark*, London 1955, p. 381. Even Bultmann would accept the historicity of the saying: op. cit., p. 173.

[3] cf. A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthaüs*, Stuttgart 1933, pp. 350f.

[4] M. J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon St Matthieu*, Paris 1948, p. 213

take the cross *daily*" (9:23). This small addition transforms the whole atmosphere. It is every day and in their daily life that the Christians will find the opportunity to imitate their master. It is by carrying those daily crosses that they will renounce their own life, and will save it by losing it; probably we may even translate: they will save their soul.'[1]

The cross is no more the cross of physical persecutions; it consists in the daily mortifications by which one applies to himself the mystery of the death of Christ. In Lk. 14:27 it may be that this conception explains the verb used by Luke for 'carrying' the cross. Instead of the commonplace *lambanein* (to take: Mt. 10:38) or *airein* (to take up: Mk. 8:35), Luke chose the rarer verb *bastazein* (to bear a burden). It has been remarked that this verb is preferred in biblical Greek when the carrying is figurative (4 Kg. 18:14; Job 21:3 according to the *codex Alexandrinus*).[2] It is also the verb used by John to describe the way of the cross (19:17). There is the possibility that John, with his interest in symbolism, saw a special significance in the fact that Jesus carried the cross 'by (or for) himself.' Lagrange suspects that John might have had in view precisely the *logion* on carrying the cross: Jesus was doing 'for himself' what he had advised his disciples to do.[3] Conversely it might be said that by using the rare verb *bastazein*, Luke referred to the carrying of the cross by Jesus. The use of that verb would be one more instance of the contacts with the Johannine tradition which have been noticed as one of the peculiarities of Luke's Gospel.[4] If such a contact does exist, the disciples and Jesus, in Luke and in John, are shown doing the same thing: Jesus, carrying the cross, brings to fulfilment the abnegation he asked from his disciples and the disciples actualise in their daily life the mystery of salvation contained in the cross.

This reference to John's thought may be questioned. But the Pauline background of Luke's rendering of the *logion* on the contrary can hardly be doubted. Between the saying on carrying the cross in its original sense and its interpretation by Luke, there is Paul's conception of Christian life: 'I have been crucified with Christ' (Gal. 2:19). Christian life consists in a mystical union with Christ. Through faith and sacraments a mystical bond is established between us and the dead and risen Lord (Rom. 6:3–6). Hence our destinies and our very body and spirit are patterned upon the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection: we are dead to flesh and its allies (Rom. 6:7–11; 7:4).

[1] L. Cerfaux, 'Fructifiez en supportant l'épreuve,' *Revue Biblique* LXIV (1957), p. 489
[2] A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 364
[3] J. M. Lagrange, *Évangile selon St Jean*, Paris 1948, pp. 490f.
[4] cf. F. M. Braun, *La Mère des Fidèles*, Tournai-Paris 1954, pp. 26–30; D. Mollat, *L'Évangile de St Jean* (*Bible de Jérusalem*), Paris 1953, p. 39

We live in the Spirit and of the Spirit, we do not depend any longer on the flesh, though we still live in the flesh ; for we are of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5–13). The old man in us has been crucified with Christ : ' we carry about everywhere in our body the putting to death (*nekrôsis*) of Jesus. Though alive, we are continuously given over to death for Jesus' sake. . . . Death is active in us ' (2 Cor. 4:10–12). It is not only the Eucharist which announces the death of the Lord, ' recalls ' it and makes it present. In another way, the daily life of the Christians does it also with its tribulations, anxieties, persecutions and shattering blows (2 Cor. 4:9).

It is easy to recognise here the principles underlying Luke's spirituality of the daily cross. Taught by Paul, Luke perceived in the *logion* on carrying the cross the depth of meaning it was to have when understood in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection. The saying, in its full sense, was no mere rhetorical invitation to follow the master till the end. It was a programme of Christian life that gave a mystical value to the manifold hardships a disciple has to endure. Those trials Luke knew by experience : he knew the heart-rending decisions which a follower of Christ has to make, against his own interests and affections. And he knew that celibacy was one of the most ' crucifying ' forms of self denial, one of the most absolute ways of taking on the *nekrôsis* of Jesus. By renouncing wife and children the disciple was enabled to strip the ' body of flesh ' most completely, not in any encratistic sense, as if the body and its use were unclean by nature (cf. Rom. 14:14, 20), but in the sense in which St Paul had spoken of a total circumcision of the whole flesh (Col. 2:11) : stripping of self, death with Christ and renunciation of any kind of merely human comfort and support. By embracing celibacy, one sets aside earthly ties and even the desire to have descendants and to see one's destiny prolonged and rejuvenated in one's children. This desire is not sinful : it is deeply rooted in human nature and it corresponds to the divine ordinance (Gen. 1:28). Yet it is still reliance on the flesh and it still belongs to the fleeting world ; it is still this side of the cosmic transformation, of the ' newness of life ' initially realised through the death and the resurrection of Christ. The disciple who has understood the *verbum crucis* has no other hope than that which shines beyond the Cross. Because he knows only Christ and him crucified, he takes the cross and the cross of celibacy. Virginity becomes for him the radical way to carry to the utmost the *nekrôsis* which is required by his fellowship with a crucified master.

If our analysis is correct, Luke's view on Christian celibacy embodies a theological development. In the sources he used, Jesus' invitation to forgo marriage and procreation for the sake of the Kingdom was

based on eschatological considerations : the Kingdom was at hand and so the times had come for those to whom it had been given, to cut themselves clear of worldly entanglements, and thus to show forth in their life the conditions prevailing in the new aeon. In Luke eschatological considerations are not excluded but they are resolved into the present reality. Celibacy is linked with the meaning of Christian life, which is a 'life in Christ,' consisting in the imitation of and identification with the master. And this is realised by shaping our destiny on the pattern of the cross, since it is on the cross that Christ completed his mission by assuming most fully his solidarity with the humanity of flesh, bringing it to the point where it would be ready to turn, by the power of the Spirit, into a humanity of glory. Celibacy announces the cross : it not only indicates that the times have come for the final decision by which one enters the New Kingdom ; it is the outward sign of a mystery which is now at work in us, the mystery of life and death by which the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ are continued in his body which is the Church.

Thus, in the outlook of the early church on the Cross and celibacy, there was a shift from eschatological hopes to a mystical view of our 'life in Christ.' It is the shift which Mgr Cerfaux has traced in the whole development of St Paul's thought on the mystery of Christ.[1] As Mgr Cerfaux does in the case of the doctrine of St Paul, it must be emphasised that from the earliest conceptions of Christian celibacy to that of Luke the development was homogeneous. Following Paul, Luke did not give up the eschatological conception of Christian life. But he deepened it, and stressed that the final decision in favour of the New Kingdom and of the new life in the Spirit was to be a matter of daily occurrence. Daily one has to side against this world and renew one's allegiance to the Kingdom. As regards celibacy also, it is daily that through it one dies to the world of flesh. Luke knew by personal experience that it is not simply a state of life one enters once for all by a single decision ; it implies a continuous renewal of the choice once made and it is a continuous mortification.

It was to be the role of Paul and Luke to reveal to the early Church the full meaning of the message of Jesus concerning the cross. Jesus had taught that the eschatological fight and victory had to be primarily interior, consisting essentially in a change of heart. Paul understood that the death on the cross was the fulfilment of that programme : he saw in the cross the sign of that change of condition, of the passage from the world of flesh to the world of the Spirit. Thus the cross had a universal significance. It had not only to be carried through the

[1] L. Cerfaux, *Le Christ dans la Théologie de St Paul*, Paris 1951. For a summary of the main thesis of the book, cf. pp. 399–401.

streets of Jerusalem ; it had to encompass the world and mark every human destiny. Luke applied that doctrine to Christian celibacy. For him dedicated celibacy shows the impact of the cross on the individual lives of the faithful. It is the sign of the cross deeply marked in the flesh and in the body and soul of the faithful. Christian celibacy is no stoicism or gnosticism ; it does not betray any indifference towards or suspicion of the body. It is on the contrary a glorification of the body. But, as in the case of the master the glorification is attained through an agony : the glory lies beyond the cross. For all the mystical value he gave to the cross, Luke, with Paul, did not idealise or allegorise it ; he did not make of it a tame comparison to express any kind of annoyance or discomfort. For Luke, the cross was still the cross, an object of infamy, anguish and forlorn abandon. It meant the same when applied to celibacy. The follower of Jesus had to know that his celibacy would be a real cross, a martyrdom. Luke would have accepted the stern description Methodius of Olympus gave of the life of Christian virgins : ' They underwent a martyrdom : for it is not just for a short time that they had to endure physical torments ; a whole life time they bore the strain. They did not hesitate to face the truly Olympic fight of chastity, resisting by force the savage assault of pleasures, fears and sorrows and the other forms of man's wickedness.' [1] Celibacy is a fight, an *agôn*, like Christ's passion. It may have all the pangs and anguish Christ experienced on the cross. But the Christian celibate is comforted by the knowledge that the pains of his state of life were also the pains of the death of his master, the birth-pains of the new world, of the progressive stripping of the flesh from the old man, as the new Adam rises slowly to the new life in the Spirit.

L. LEGRAND

St Peter's Seminary,
Bangalore

BIBLE LANDS BY JEEP—III [2]

Jerusalem

The numerous journeys made by St Paul, both within Palestine and outside, make it difficult to follow his footsteps in any sort of chrono-

[1] *Convivium Decem Virginum* VII, 3 (P.G. 18, 128). The theme of celibacy as a deadly combat occupies an important part in the early monastic spirituality. cf. J. Steinmann, *Saint John the Baptist and the Desert Tradition*, London 1955, pp. 159–67.

[2] Two previous articles dealt with travel through Bible Lands in general (*Scripture* 1961, pp. 88–92) and with the Exodus in particular (pp. 117–124). This last article offers some observations on sites connected with St Paul, whose journeys were retraced in the second half of the expedition in question.