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The Christology of St. Mark

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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ST. MARK

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christology is an important area of theological discussion today. Many prominent scholars of the present century have set themselves to the task of studying the person and work of Jesus Christ. As is often the case, this great discussion has gone through a number of phases. Important schools of thought have arisen and with each school a new view of the figure we call Jesus Christ. The diversity of these views presents a very important problem for the present time. Not every opinion or theory can be correct, but a correct picture is nevertheless desired. A brief survey of the nature of these movements will further indicate the tendencies in this situation.

One such movement can be largely attributed to the so-called "liberal" school. This group in its search for the "historical Jesus," emphasized above all his essential humanness.¹ Actually these scholars gave us little more than a religious genius who was practically a mere lay figure. His greatness lay primarily in his ability to teach and lead men in wonderful ways. Despite its excesses, however, this "Jesus of history" movement has helped eliminate the old docetic tendencies which prevailed so long in the Church. We are no longer satisfied with an account which does not reckon with the fact that Jesus was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. But something was lacking here too.

¹A. M. Hunter, Interpreting the New Testament 1900-1950 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), p. 133.

William Temple points this out rather well, "Why any man should have troubled to crucify the liberal Christ of Protestantism has always been a mystery."² Jesus is too much to be explained in terms of man alone.

The reaction to this movement constitutes the other pole in present-day Christology. Many theologians have come to doubt that any worthwhile reconstruction of the historical Jesus can be made. To them, the only really significant work must be accomplished by approaching his through the dogmas we have. The new school of "Form Criticism" is in a sense responsible for this change in approach. Since the methods of this school rule out many sections of the Gospel narrative, or at least relegate them to other purposes, the possibility of real historical discussion is seriously questioned. D. M. Baillie criticizes this branch of Christological studies for even implying at times that the Jesus of history never existed.³ The Jesus of faith is set over against the Jesus of history.

These are the two main approaches; many aspects of the problem take other directions, however. As an indication of the whole complex of studies, Archibald Hunter lists the following as the ten most important contributions to the story of Jesus in the twentieth century.⁴

William Sanday, Outlines of the Life of Christ. This book presents no radical theory. The life of Christ is given along the traditional lines adhering very closely to the words of the Bible.

²Ibid., pp. 133f.

³D. M. Baillie, God Was in Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1948), pp. 26f.

⁴A. M. Hunter, op. cit., pp. 49-57.

James Denney, Jesus and the Gospel. According to Hunter, Denney considers Jesus a person not only equal to the place which Christian faith has assigned him, but one who assumes that place naturally and spontaneously as his own.

Albert Schweitzer, The Quest for the Historical Jesus. To Schweitzer, Jesus is a strange imperious figure obsessed by an apocalyptic dream in which the birth pangs of the New Age, Parousia, and Last Judgment followed one another in quick succession. He tried to force God to bring the Kingdom by his death and died forsaken. The story is completely eschatological.

T. R. Glover, Jesus of History. Hunter characterizes this account as stating that Jesus was a man only, a teacher of genius who discovered God the Father, rested wholly in him, and died to reveal him. Eschatology is completely absent.

Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was an unorthodox Galilean "Rab" who mistakenly believed Himself to be the Messiah, went to Jerusalem to triumph, but was seized by the Sadducean priests and crucified by the Romans. His greatness lies only in his ethic.

Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus. Bultmann considers Jesus a prophet who bears the decisive Word of God to men which sets them in the eschatological NOW and challenges them for or against God.

Middleton Murray, Life of Jesus. Jesus was a teacher who, knowing God as his Father would have all men share his secret. But halfway through his life he was disappointed that the Son of Man failed to appear, and assumed the role of apocalyptic Messiah dying to bring in the Kingdom. In this he failed.

T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus. Manson makes Jesus a leader of a group of disciples who thus constituted the New Israel and were the fulfilment collectively of Daniel's "Son of Man." But his followers did not rise to his height and he stood alone at the cross as the true incarnation of the Son of Man. The death of Jesus, however, became the birth pangs of the Son of Man and after his resurrection found embodiment in the Church, his body, of which he is the head.

Maurice Goguel, The Life of Jesus. Jesus is an eschatological prophet proclaiming the imminent Kingdom of God. After initial popularity he is put to flight by Herod, and forsaken by the people for refusing to play the role of Messianic King. After Peter's confession, he became one who must suffer and then inaugurate the supernatural Kingdom of God as the Son of Man. The enemies killed him and he died believing that God had deserted him.

Rudolf Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man. Jesus is the eschatological redeemer with the Kingdom of the future but begun now. He died as redeemer and included his disciples through the Lord's Supper.

Other accounts could easily be added to this list, but most of the trends are identifiable in the ten just presented. One point is clear, all of these views cannot be completely right. They are too divergent to be quickly harmonized. On the other hand, the problem cannot be bypassed. It is imperative that the Christian Church know the Jesus whom she is proclaiming and preaching.

The purpose of this paper will be to attempt an analysis of the Christology presented in the Gospel according to St. Mark. This Gospel has been widely used for Christological studies for good reasons. The fact that this Gospel is generally considered to be the earliest of the

four would make its testimony of prime importance in investigating the actual historical evidence about Jesus of Nazareth. The very nature of the Gospel according to St. Mark is another factor in using it as a basic record. Luke may be considered to excel in the beauty of narrative, John in his insight and exposition of the meaning of the Word made flesh, and Matthew in his systematic presentation of Christ's teaching. The outstanding characteristic of Mark is the simplicity and vividness with which he presents the "strong Son of God."⁵ Mark more than anyone else is content to give the evidence and let the case rest with that. His Christology is more by implication and choice of material than by actual assertion.⁶ This by no means negates the witness of the other evangelists. Their work is equally essential. For this study, however, the Gospel of Mark seems best.

The study will be divided into six basic areas. A significant feature in Mark's presentation is the various terms which are used in referring to Jesus. The important "Son of Man" as well as the other names used to designate him will therefore be investigated and their Christological implications surveyed. A strong emphasis is also placed by Mark on the public activity of Jesus and the significance of that activity. This will constitute a second source of information about him. In close connection with this is his teaching. Although much less actual instruction is recorded by Mark than by the other evangelists, a sufficient witness is given to show some very important aspects of what

⁵A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to St. Mark, in Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 23.

⁶G. C. Allen, The Gospel According to St. Mark, in The Oxford Church Biblical Commentary (London: Rivingtons, 1915), p. 31.

Jesus himself considered his person and work to be. In the opposition which Jesus encountered is another valuable source of study. The main purpose for studying this section of Mark's account is to see just why Jesus was resisted. The enemies give a valuable testimony because they present the other side of the picture, and it will be seen that this does not confuse but rather substantiates the rest of Mark's record. The so-called "Messianic Secret" has presented a considerable problem in most Christologies. Although no greatly detailed presentation will be made, this problem too will be analyzed to show that Mark's Christology is both authentic and in harmony with that presented by Christ himself. A final investigation will be made into the structure of the Gospel since this will indicate much of the writer's purpose and goal. With this basic structure, the writer hopes to construct the basic Christology as presented by the Gospel according to St. Mark.

CHAPTER II

THE NAMES USED FOR JESUS

As Jesus walked and talked with men, he naturally created an impression among them. In fact, not only did he come into contact with them, he actually taught and instructed concerning himself. This means that many people had an opinion of him; even though they may have disagreed violently, these persons probably gave some thought to just what sort of person he might be. Therefore one good indication of how his contemporaries thought of Jesus should be the terms which they used for him. Many groups called him many things and in so doing revealed at least somewhat of an idea of what they considered him to be. Accordingly, in constructing a Christology from this book, a study of these groups and the names they used for Jesus is necessary.

Names Used by the Crowd

In the words of the crowd, the general impression created by Jesus should most easily be seen. Occasional contacts, hearsay, reputation all make up the opinion of the average man. The most frequent name used by the crowd was apparently the title, "Rabbi." This was a term of respect for Jewish teachers of the law and is seen in Mark four times. Mark also used the Greek, *ῥαββί*, evidently as an equivalent to the Hebrew form "Rabbi" for the benefit of Gentile readers.¹ Thus it would seem that the first impression created by

¹Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 116.

Jesus on friend and foe alike was that he was a master of Scripture.² This is the one term which all groups use for him. The idea of master or teacher is also the main content of *Κύριος*, used only a few times in Mark. It definitely lacks the reverential meaning of Luke or John's usage, and probably comes much closer to our English, "sir." No attempt is made to impose the favorite word of the early church into the narrative and this factor might be mentioned as an indication that Mark is basing his work on actual reminiscences rather than his own creative fancy.³

Evidently some of the people also saw in Jesus a prophet. The discussion in Mark 6:14-16 would definitely indicate such an idea. The answer of the disciples (8:28) also bears this out. The Jews of course were still looking for the promised prophet who was to be a climactic spokesman in God's eschatology (Dt. 18:15) and no doubt some of them saw the spirit of bygone prophets in Jesus. The connection with Elijah puts even more into the expectation since this definitely tied him up with the coming age (Mal. 4:5). However, even though Jesus called himself a prophet in a sense (6:14), he very clearly gave the role of Elijah to John the Baptist (9:13). From all this, however, one fact does stand out, the people recognized a special connection with God when they considered him a prophet. To them, "prophet" generally implied a God-given message, a teaching ministry, and a group of special followers. He was more than an ordinary rabbi or teacher to them.⁴

²Ethelbert Stauffer, New Testament Theology, translated from the German by John Marsh (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 112.

³Taylor, op. cit., p. 118.

⁴F. V. Filson, Jesus Christ the Risen Lord (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 138.

This special distinction was carried a little further yet in the cry, "Son of David." This definitely had its Messianic implications and as such will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter five. But here it should be noted that in calling Jesus the "Son of David" Bartimaeus (10:47f.) was probably making an appeal to him as Messiah even though nothing can be definitely stated as to just what that meant.⁵ But it also seems that this was by no means a general cry of the crowd. In fact Mark's insertion of the story seems to indicate rather that this was an individual case.⁶

Perhaps the best conclusion which can be drawn from the language of the general crowd is that they were definitely impressed by Jesus. Some were willing to see God's hand in his activity. Others were wondering about his connection with the coming Messianic Age while a few even called him names with Messianic overtones. Jesus was a figure above the ordinary; just who he might be was a matter of varied opinions.

Names Used by the Enemies

The Pharisees and scribes generally referred to Jesus as "teacher." The best summary of their attitude is probably that even though they refused to give any high place to Jesus, they couldn't ignore his abilities completely. They therefore addressed him with a respectful but noncommittal, "teacher."⁷

⁵Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, translated by D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), p. 322.

⁶J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1913), p. 135.

⁷Ibid., p. 138.

Jesus' other set of enemies, however, add much more to the case. The demons--supernatural beings and therefore possessors no doubt of supernatural knowledge--became very excited when Jesus came into their midst. Their cries reveal a fear of the "Son of God." As far as previous usage of the title goes, it can be found in the Old Testament for angels (Job 1:6), Israel (Ex. 4:22), but especially for the king (Ps. 2:7).⁸ However, the kingship has a very definite connection with the Messiah in these instances. None of these usages seem to really fit this situation, however. Rather the emphasis is on his very nature. Jesus is not here called the son of God because he recognizes God as his father. Nor is it only that the evil spirits recognize something supernatural. Their personal address, "Son of God," seems to show that they see through the flesh and blood to Jesus as the Son of God.⁹ Mark, by including their testimony, above that of the crowd, is bringing in an important element which he then supplements with the accounts of the Transfiguration and Baptism (1:11,9:7). These are not adoptionistic references but seem to show that Jesus by his very nature is the son of God. Mark has no theory of the Incarnation, but assumes that Jesus is Deus absconditus, visible to those who have the eyes.¹⁰ In the early period, only the supernatural devils have the eyes. They see Jesus for what he really is, an enemy because he is the very Son of God. It is the power which he possesses and the fact that he can conquer which scares them. In their fright they call him "Son of God." They know

⁸Taylor, op. cit., p. 120.

⁹Edwyn Hoskyns and Noel Davey, The Riddle of the New Testament (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p. 112.

¹⁰Taylor, op. cit., p. 121.

that they have reason to be afraid. This eliminates any adoptionistic possibilities. The relation is closer than can be claimed by any man.¹¹ This does not imply any sort of docetism, however. Mark is full of references which speak in favor of Jesus' manhood. Though Son of God, he is still a man.

Names Used by the Disciples

The most significant factor in the names used by the disciples, is the confession on the road to Caesarea Philippi (8:27-30). The whole structure of Mark seems to center the understanding of the disciples around this point. The question of Jesus becomes the main issue, "Who do you say that I am?" Mark seems to be trying to indicate this as the break in the disciples' thinking from Rabbi to Messiah.¹² Before this time the disciples seem to have had much in common with the crowd as far as their opinion of Jesus was concerned. They surely were not on that very same level, considering their unique call and relation to Jesus, but their term of address is usually Rabbi or Teacher. On the road to Caesarea Philippi, however, the disciples break from the crowd which considers Jesus as a prophet or Elijah, and through Peter affirm that they believe Jesus to be the "Christ." This was obviously more than the popular concept. The revelation according to Matthew had not come from flesh and blood.

The basic meaning of the word, *Χριστός*, is minor compared to the general conception of the individual concerned but several points

¹¹Sigmund Mowinkel, *He That Cometh*, translated by G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, n.d.), pp. 4-7.

¹²Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

may be noted. The word is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew signifying the "anointed one." Actually the character became more important than the actual act of anointing and especially signified that the person was under God's peculiar protection. To do violence to him was an outrage of God himself.¹³ As such the title referred to the reigning king of Israel whose essential characteristic was his anointing. This showed his close, special, sacred relation to Yahweh. This was the Old Testament usage from which the title must have come. The eschatological is not prominent in this conception at all. Most Old Testament passages rather show a political significance which also accounts for the expectation with which Jesus had to contend as shown by all the evangelists. From its very beginning the term had political overtones.¹⁴

Between Jesus and the Old Testament stood intertestamental Judaism. The writings of this time had developed far beyond the original concepts. These naturally form a background for Jesus' words; he had to relate himself to these concepts in part by confirming them and in part by denying them. It was in this later Judaism that the Messiah became especially an eschatological figure.¹⁵ Thus in Enoch 48:10 and frequently thereafter the term is used of the national defender from David's line. The New Testament generally gives evidence that such an

¹³Gustaf Dalman, op. cit., p. 295.

¹⁴Mowinckel, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 3-8.

expectation was common at Jesus' time.¹⁶ For Peter to call Jesus the Christ meant that he saw in Jesus the one expected by Israel. Just how much better his view was than the rest of Israel is hard to determine. There still was confusion after the confession (9:32) and the aspirations of James and John seem to indicate some connection with the political (10:35ff.). One thing is certain, the confession was enough for Jesus to accept and use as basis for further instruction. He apparently received the answer he wanted and in the way he wanted it.

The confusion of the disciples is not to be disregarded in Mark. The confession was not a quick, final decision achieved early in their fellowship with Jesus. Even though they had been called specially, and were witnesses of his many works, they were still uncertain about his true position for a long time. This makes the confession even more climactic in Mark's account and further indicates that the idea of Messiahship had to come from Jesus himself. Although the confession had to come from them, it did not originate with them.

The disciples add to our study the conviction that Jesus was the promised one to Israel.

Name Used by Jesus

Jesus' own designation of himself is the most important part of this study. None should know better than he himself just who he is. Here the study becomes very interesting because Jesus really used only one title for himself, "The Son of Man." This is the case not only in Mark's work, but in the entire New Testament. In John 12:34, the people

¹⁶E. P. Gould, The Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: Scribner's, c.1896), p. 3.

are actually repeating the words of Jesus. Stephen (Acts 7:56) uses the term at his death, but again this seems to reflect Jesus' own usage. Paul does not use it at all. It is also significant that the Church never really made it the standard designation for the Messiah. The usage is apparently Jesus' idea and his only.¹⁷

No attempt will be made to study the concept of "Son of Man" in its entirety in this paper. This is a subject in itself. However it is necessary to try to find the best and basic ideas associated with the phrase if a Christology is to be developed from this book.

Linguistically, the words seem to be the rendering of the Aramaic bar nasha.¹⁸ But this in turn seems to go back to Biblical Hebrew which is $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$. בְּרֵאשִׁית is usually a collective noun, but did become the designation for "mankind." The singular form found here is very rare. $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ is found only in the poetry of the Old Testament. When used in the Apocrypha it is still a reflection of this Old Testament usage. From this, it can be said that the Hebrew $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ denotes a member of the genus man, not the son of a certain man (emphasizing one son of one man). For a single human, the word was $\text{בֶּן} \text{ אָדָם}$. The Biblical Aramaic follows the Hebrew. $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ not $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ was the word for the ordinary man. $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ like $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ was also used for mankind. Thus $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם} \text{ כְּאַחַד} \text{ מִבְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ (Dan. 7:13) means, "like one of the human species." Because of this generic nature always attached to the phrase, it never occurs in the definite form. The definite particle is attached only to the word $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ so that $\text{אָדָם} \text{ בְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם} \text{ כְּאַחַד} \text{ מִבְּרֵאשִׁית} \text{ אָדָם}$ (definite) must not be

¹⁷Dalman, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁸Taylor, op. cit., p. 119.

merely a human being, but the "Son of Man" emphasizing the distinct form attached to the phrase. This would definitely contradict Wellhausen who said there was no other term for just plain man than $\text{ܐܰܢܰܫܰܝܰܐ} \quad \text{ܕܰܗܰܘܰܢܰܐ}$ and thus implied that no special significance should be attached to it. From these observations it can be concluded that Jewish Palestinian Aramaic possessed ܐܰܢܰܫܰܝܰܐ for a human being, $\text{ܐܰܢܰܫܰܝܰܐ} \quad \text{ܕܰܗܰܘܰܢܰܐ}$ for a number of them. The singular $\text{ܐܰܢܰܫܰܝܰܐ} \quad \text{ܕܰܗܰܘܰܢܰܐ}$ was not in common use. Where found it is an imitation of the Hebrew poetical use. In Daniel 7:13 the expression is uncommon for prose writing along with several other words there. It was in a special usage.¹⁹

To show the special force of the Aramaic phrase in Greek was difficult. For the plural $\text{οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου}$ was sufficient; it indicated men in general. But in the singular too much stress would be laid on both nouns if articles were used with both. On the other hand, ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου would only be "the son of a man," (thus losing the idea of mankind in the latter noun). ὁ ἀνθρώπος would be the ordinary expression for a man and would miss the point entirely. The best answer therefore was to use $\text{ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου}$ which gave at least some indication of the Aramaic definite.²⁰ It therefore seems impossible to deny either that the phrase could have a definite Messianic designation, or that Jesus could use it of himself. When he called himself "the Man," he is either giving it or there is already in it a specific meaning apart from the usual "man."²¹

¹⁹Dalman, op. cit., pp. 231-239.

²⁰Ibid., p. 240.

²¹Grundriss, op. cit., p. 347.

This gives us the right to proceed to further investigation as to the specific meaning of the term. The vision in Daniel 7 is really the only place in the Old Testament where any ideas can be deduced for the "Son of Man." In this vision four beasts represent four kingdoms, each replacing the former, and the last (Antiochus IV, Syria) is the worst. But at God's time, the world empire will end and Israel will be given dominion. The people are given this position as "Saints of the Most High." Thus "Son of Man" is expressly connected with Israel in this context. But Daniel did not invent all these symbols. It seems much more probable that he used figures which were already known. So the sea, four winds, and other signs are employed as though the people know what is meant. The Son of Man also was probably already known. From the discussion in Daniel 7 there must have been a conception of (1) A heavenly being in human form (not only a likeness, but completely in this form); (2) At turn of the age, in the eschatological era, he would appear; (3) He would receive from God power over all kingdoms and peoples; (4) Would also play a part in the world's judgment.²²

The figure of the Son of Man appears in other pre-Christian, Jewish sources with interpretations not possible from Daniel 7 alone. The concept must have existed independently and in addition to this passage. In this intertestamental literature, the Son of Man does appear.

In the Ethiopic Book of Enoch the theme is the fate of the righteous and the ungodly along with the eschatological role of the Son of Man as judge of the world and ruler of the righteous. This is a Jewish book, probably from the Roman period.

²²Ibid., pp. 348-352.

In the Ezra Apocalypse (2 Esdras) which is a revision of the old Shealtiel Apocalypse written before the destruction of Jerusalem, the figure is mostly a national Messiah with features from the Son of Man. This holds true for the Apocalypse of Baruch also.

In the Targums the "Son of Man" in Psalm 8:5, 114:3, and 80:18 is interpreted as the "Messiah." The Rabbis also often interpret "one like a man" as the Messiah. But they are in reality just transferring the features of a son of man to the Messiah.²³

The Iranian "Urmensch" which is quite important in many scholarly investigations may well have influenced the concepts of the Jews. This however will not be analyzed, since we are dealing only in a survey style with the concepts and not primarily the entire origins and possibilities.

The primary place for understanding is still Daniel therefore. Nowhere else is the agency of God alone so unreservedly asserted for the change of earthly conditions. The stone is untouched by human hands. The Son of Man is from heaven. The violent ones only serve to establish the vision, they are in reality destined to ruin. Jesus in Palestine fits this part of the idea well. In contrast to the Messiah which emphasizes the ruler only after his enthronement, the Son of Man was one who was still to receive the glory and sovereignty. This makes it altogether possible for him to suffer and die as part of his course.²⁴

²³Ibid., pp. 353-358.

²⁴Dalman, op. cit., pp. 264f.

The prime feature of the other writings is that the Son of Man is an eschatological figure. In Enoch, the theme is transformation. This eschatological activity is the task of the Son of Man. Before creation the Lord of Spirits created, chose and preserved him to bring all creatures to his glory (1 En. 48:5) by saving the righteous and destroying the wicked. This also fits with Daniel. His coming means the end of the heathen rule and the dawn of the sovereignty of God.²⁵ This one was also different from all other heavenly beings if there is to be any meaning to his name. Even though heavenly and divine he is called the "Man."²⁶

Thus at the time of Jesus there were two lines in the Jewish expectation, the Messiah and the Son of Man. These, however, were not completely separate. Already in Enoch (1 En. 48:10, 52:4) the two were joined. In 2 Esdras 13:3 the man who delivers at the end of time "shall spring from the seed of David." An interweaving was definitely present.²⁷ But it also seems quite certain that of the two terms, Messiah was by far the most prominent. Son of Man was there but not really a common Messianic title.

Actually the question as to whether the Son of Man was interpreted Messianically in the pre-Christian era and whether it was linked with the Messiah is not the crux of the matter, because Jesus himself is the originator of the doctrine as applied to him.²⁸ Although it is most

²⁵Nowinkel, op. cit., p. 358.

²⁶Ibid., p. 353.

²⁷Ibid., p. 360.

²⁸Taylor, op. cit., pp. 119f.

likely that the term had already been connected with the Messiah, it is also true that Jesus did not simply take it over in the same sense. The term contained what he wanted to say in its essential elements but he then adapted it to his case.²⁹ We must therefore look at his own usage of the term.

Of the fourteen times that Jesus uses this phrase in the Gospel of Mark, three are definitely like Daniel 7 and the intertestamental writings (14:62, 8:38, 13:26).³⁰ The dominant idea in these texts is that of sovereignty, especially in the eschatological sense. As in Daniel 7, the Son of Man receives the kingdom from God, so Jesus looks forward to his own ultimate triumph.³¹ In *Knock* 62:2 we find, "And the Lord of Spirits seated him on the throne of His glory;" in Mark 14:62, "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power."³² Jesus took over the sovereignty and glory of the Son of Man and applied it to himself. He regarded himself as the one destined to receive the glory and rule from God and whose task was the bearing of God's rule to men by creating the people of God.³³

More significant, however, is the fact that Jesus added a completely new idea to this term. In fact, it becomes evident that this was his real reason for adopting the designation; he wanted to introduce an idea

²⁹Mowinkel, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

³⁰Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

³¹A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 45.

³²N. C. Allen, *The Gospel According to St. Mark, in The Oxford Biblical Commentary* (London: Rivingtons, 1915), p. 30.

³³Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

which was completely lacking in the popular Messianic concepts. The new feature was the concept of the Suffering Servant. In the old tradition the Son of Man was a ruler, but in Mark he came, "not to be ministered unto but to minister" (10:45).³⁴ In the entire Gospel, Jesus uses this idea nine times (8:31, 9:9, 9:12, 10:33, 10:45, 11:21, 11:21, 11:41) in relation to the Suffering Servant of Yaweh.³⁵ The background of this concept is Isaiah 53 which speaks of the Suffering Servant of Yaweh. He is there described as being despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The words of Jesus take on the form of a prophetic prediction and connect the suffering and death with the role of the Son of Man. He prophesied rejection, death and resurrection as well as future glory.³⁶ The proclamation had to come from Jesus himself. It was hardly possible for the disciples to have made the death a basic feature of their faith purely on their own. Even though Isaiah 53 gives the concept of the Suffering Servant, it is not clear that the disciples with their nationalistic political ideas could have attained this insight unaided. The Targums even relegate the suffering to Israel or the heathen nations. Some scholars maintain that the disciples read the suffering and death into the Son of Man idea. Mark, however, makes quite a point of the fact that the disciples did just the opposite; Jesus alone proclaims the idea. Mark openly declares that the idea of the Son of Man suffering and dying was unknown to the disciples (9:12, 32)³⁷

³⁴Stauffer, op. cit., p. 109.

³⁵Taylor, op. cit., p. 119.

³⁶Hoskyns and Davey, op. cit., p. 108.

³⁷William Hanson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), pp. 2-10.

The best conclusion therefore seems to be that Jesus took a known but not popular term so that he might express his position as it really existed apart from any popular coloring. The term "Christ" was overloaded with but one aspect, the political. Jesus took the old apocalyptic "Son of Man" designation and gave it a deep paradoxical meaning related only to himself. The two basic motifs were his suffering and his glory. By doing this, he did obscure his Messiahship from his hearers in a sense, but this was only part of the case as we shall see in chapter six of this paper. The essential fact was that this term expressed the mysterious nature of his personality, his human situation and his future glory.³⁸ Nor is this "Son of Man" Christology to be considered as Mark's invention, the material in Matthew and Luke has the same idea. The entire tradition emphasizes the two aspects, humiliation and glory. They are held together by the title "Son of Man."³⁹

The fact that the term does not become popular in later history seems to rule out any conjecture that it was read into the tradition at a later date. The very fact that Mark included the term in spite of its lack of use in the later church attests to the authenticity and historicity of the account. The term evidently originated with Jesus and was confined to his sayings.

The contribution of Jesus to the Christology of Mark is therefore the important one. He assigns to himself a special place, not merely parallel to the Old Testament Messiah as understood in his day, nor yet to the Son of Man in apocalyptic literature. He rather chooses a distinct

³⁸Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁹Hoskyns and Davey, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

title, "Son of Man," and thus presents his own unique character which was primarily that of the Suffering Servant who was also destined for a future reign in glory.

Names Used by the Author

Mark uses the name "Jesus" either alone or in combination a total of eighty-one times. Nothing in the Gospel suggests that this is any sort of a cult name. He more frequently uses the personal pronoun, taking for granted the person meant thereby.⁴⁰ Several times, notably at the very beginning of the book, Mark calls him the Christ, but there is obviously no intention to make great issue of any name of the writer's own making. He is not trying to force his view on the reader, but intends by the presentation of the historical events to make his point.

Conclusion

The crowds recognized Jesus as prophet, teacher, and healer. The enemies had to admit his position. The demons add much more to the account because of their supernatural knowledge and insight. They saw that Jesus was in fact the Son of God. Mark seems to include their witness to bring out this very vital aspect of his nature, showing that he had power and right which could be no mere adoptionism or election. He was the Son of God. The disciples, taught by Jesus, finally came to the confession that he was the promised Messiah. On the basis of this belief, Jesus could build a further understanding which showed them especially the role and work of the Messiah. Jesus himself claimed to

⁴⁰Taylor, op. cit., p. 117.

be the Messiah. He did this, however, not in terms of the political defender of Jewish expectation, but by utilizing another less known concept, the "Son of Man." The chief reason for this was his need to make the Suffering Servant an integral part of his mission and to combine with it his future glory. Throughout all these designations, however, one consistent picture is presented. That the crowd should see Jesus' special ability, the demons his true nature, the disciples his Messiahship, and Jesus himself the real underlying case, is not contradiction but rather the result of Mark's consistent portrayal of one person from many angles.

CHAPTER III

THE ACTIVITY OF JESUS

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the Christological aspects of the public ministry of Jesus. It is significant that in the earliest Christian preaching, the Messiahship of Jesus was supported by an appeal to the works which he accomplished. Two early examples of Christian proclamation, Acts 2:22 and 10:38, show the importance attached to Jesus' works. He is credited not only by his doctrine, or his personal greatness, but by his activity. This was in harmony with the Hebrew-Jewish concept of history. God made himself known by his mighty acts and his outstretched arm. The Christian proclamation took cognizance of this fact and gave a prominent place to the works of Jesus.¹

The Gospel of Mark gives such a position to the works of Jesus also. The very heart of the message is that the time is now fulfilled because the one who is attended by the power of God has come; his acts manifest the day of salvation. The "good news" of Mark is witnessing to this consummation.² In the Gospel of Mark, some 209 verses out of 666 deal directly or indirectly with miracles (31 per cent). In the first ten chapters (i.e., excluding the Passion narrative), 200 out of 425 verses or about 47 per cent of the narrative is devoted to the miraculous.³

¹William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), pp. 33f.

²Ibid., p. 35.

³Alan Richardson, The Miracle Stories of the Gospels (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 36.

The task then is to determine why the miracles of Jesus are so prominent and in answering this question much will be learned about his real position and nature. Many answers to the question have been given; not all are equally good.

For a long time it was believed that miracle stories in the New Testament were to be understood only as evidence of the supernatural power of Jesus. The fact that Jesus could heal meant simply that Jesus was divine. But in reality such a concept is a modern idea. In the first century such wonder working was not actually regarded as a proof of divinity. The sons of the Pharisees were considered able to cast out demons and not by the power of Beelzebub. Further, Jesus rejected the idea of signs in such a sense.⁴ There must be more meaning to the miracles, than mere evidence for the divine.

Others say that the miracle stories were told to show the compassion of Jesus. But this would set them off in purpose from the rest of the narrative and only in a few instances do the writers give the motive of Jesus behind a miracle. Thus in Mark, *σπλαγχνίσομαι* is used only three times of Jesus and one of these (1:41) has some doubt. The other two (6:34, 8:2) would hardly be enough to emphasize compassion.⁵

Another approach to the miracles is that of the Form Critics. They say that our day is different from the early times. The people of that day saw God in the inexplicable; we see him in the logical and natural. This made it inevitable that stories would arise to support his divine nature. Jesus did perform extraordinary deeds, but not to the extent of

⁴Ibid., p. 36.

⁵Ibid., p. 29.

the Gospel stories. Two types of narrative are employed. The "paradigms" are simple and primitive. The healing activity is at the center and connected with the proclamation. But the emphasis is not on the miraculous as much as on the nearness of the Kingdom. The "tales" are historical also, but there is perhaps a "heightening" of the miraculous. The writers made "epiphanies" out of the basic material. Thus, Jesus did do great things, but the historicity of most of these is hard to estimate. Much is made of the parallels between the Gospel accounts and the techniques of the wonder workers in the non-Christian societies. The methods employed by Jesus in these acts indicate to the Form Critics that these were separate "stories" built up by other men than the preachers; later they became part of the tradition.⁶ This explanation has its difficulties also. There are a good number of miracles which record no action by Jesus. He simply heals with a word (1:25, 4:39, 10:52, etc.). Further, the Bible is full of symbolic acts in both the Old and New Testaments. Often these actions give the "tone" of the story, inaudible in any other way. It seems only natural to find them in the miracles.⁷ If the miracles are inventions then many of the sayings must be too. The two are often too interwoven to be separated. The saying about those in need of a physician, the discussion of Beelzebub's part in the miracles and several other accounts are really lost if the miracles connected are destroyed.⁸ Much more could be said on this problem, but for the purposes

⁶Martin Dibelius, Jesus, translated by Charles E. Hedrick and F. C. Grant (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1949), pp. 80-82.

⁷Richardson, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

⁸Edwyn Hoskyns and Noel Davey, The Riddle of the New Testament (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), p. 120.

of this paper it is sufficient to state that it appears an oversimplification to maintain that the miracles are to be viewed as a later invention. They are too well integrated in Jesus' ministry.

One factor in understanding the nature of the miracles is to see them in relation to the concept of the power of God. To the Hebrew mind, this had one absolute source, God himself. All other manifestations were derivative from it. The New Testament emphasizes this concept by a constant emphasis on the *δύναμις*. The Hebrew mind did not dwell on Being, but on Activity. God is he of whom it can be said, *πάντα δύναται* (10:27). Thus *δύναμις* can actually be a synonym for God (11:62). This *δύναμις* is a characteristic of the Kingdom of God. It is an irresistible power silently at work in the world. With such a background, Mark can well be trying to indicate that the power of Christ is the power of God in action. The miracles then would not just be the casual acts of a wonder worker, but a revelation of the power and saving purpose of God in a higher sense.⁹

This power is not to be taken as a mere sign, however. The works of Jesus were not signs of what he was in the simple sense. In response to a request from the Pharisees (8:12) for a sign, Jesus emphatically refused. One reason for this probably lay in the significance of the sign. In the Old Testament the prophets often used signs as a sort of endorsement from heaven. Jesus evidently does not want to be on that level. He wanted his own person to be the only sign and for it to be enough in itself. The prophets needed signs to show their divine authority in spite of their

⁹Richardson, op. cit., pp. 5-16.

obvious imperfections. Jesus apparently did not feel that he needed this. The "sign" would prove he was a Messiah of some sort perhaps, but of the wrong sort.¹⁰

Jesus' works were signs in a far deeper sense. The understanding of his teaching and a recognition of such signs go hand in hand. When the disciples began to worry over their lack of bread (8:14ff.), Jesus chided them for their lack of understanding one of the signs, the feeding of the crowds. He expected them to see something deeper in what he had done. His work was essentially connected with his word. Both went together to make up his creative ministry and both were intended to serve the same function. The teaching with authority was a direct challenge to the mind. The works did the same thing, in action. The parable was a spoken miracle, the miracle a spoken parable.¹¹ As such there is deep significance to the "seeing" which Jesus expected. To the outsider the work might be one more wonder, to the believer much more must be the result.¹²

Mark records the impression created by the acts of Jesus in many places. In fact, Mark seems to be aware that even a false prophet can heal, but adds the effect of the miracles on the crowd to show that more than a wonder worker is here. The most significant incident is in 7:36. In this passage, the people use words which parallel very closely the words of Isaiah 35:5,6. According to this passage, the eyes of the

¹⁰J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), pp. 110-112.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 112-114.

¹²Richardson, op. cit., pp. 47f.

blind are opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped in the New Age. To Mark, the bringer of the New Age, the Messiah, has come.¹³ The cleansed leper (1:41) is sent for a "testimony to the priest." The whole set of miracles in Mark, especially the healing of the withered hand (3:1-6), and the sick of the palsy (2:3-12) seem to rest on this Old Testament background. In fact the word "stammerer" is used only here in the entire New Testament and only in this Isaiah passage in the Septuagint.¹⁴

This connection of his works with the coming kingdom is emphasized by Jesus himself. The Beelzebub controversy (3:22-30) makes it a matter of kingdoms in collision. The miracles of Jesus are miracles of the kingdom.¹⁵ This also fits in perfectly with the emphasis on demons in Mark's gospel. The demons represent the kingdom of Satan, the power in command before the inbreaking of the kingdom of God. This makes for battle and the Gospel account is a colorful presentation of the war between Jesus and the demons. Jesus sees his mission in Galilee as a stronger man who despoils the strong man of his prey.¹⁶

Not only did Jesus present his work as the work of the kingdom, he seems to have regarded the unwillingness to perceive the true significance of his miracles as equivalent to a rejection of his Gospel. Those who do not recognize who he is are not given the privilege of beholding the works of the Messiah. This seems to be the implication of Mark 6:5 where

¹³E. Lohse, Mark's Witness to Jesus Christ (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p. 56.

¹⁴Hoskyns and Davey, op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁵Richardson, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁶A. M. Hunter, The Work and Words of Jesus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), p. 111.

Jesus did no great work in his own country. It is hardly correct to think that the power of Jesus was limited to the attitude of the onlookers. It is more reasonable to believe that Jesus refused to show the signs of the kingdom to those who refused him personally. The miracles were not done for their own sake. They were a part of his proclamation about himself and this had already been cut off by their rejection of him.¹⁷

All this assumes that the Scriptures are all important in understanding the Gospel accounts. The followers of Jesus were Jews who knew Scripture well. They should have been very capable of understanding the significance of what they saw. The Old Testament is presented as fulfilled in Christ, not cast aside.¹⁸

The story of the leper (1:40-45) is full of the Old Testament overtones, since leprosy was especially connected with sin. The leper was shunned because he was religiously unclean. Jesus by healing and coming to him, is definitely revealing himself as one who comes for the problem of sin.¹⁹

The story of the paralytic (2:1-12) actually causes a controversy over the ability of Jesus to forgive sin. To the Jews the power to heal meant the breaking of the power of sin. It was a function of the priest and not the medical practitioner. For this reason the question, "By what authority do you do these things?" reaches an acute form when Jesus deliberately tells the man his sins are forgiven. Jesus with an act implies that his healing work is in line with his offering of the forgiveness

¹⁷Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 81f.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

of sins. He accepts the paradox that only God can forgive sins and leaves them with the problem of who he is.²⁰

This same relation of healing and salvation is evident in the other healing miracles also. The healings are symbols of God's forgiveness in action. The assumption that sickness is the consequence of sin is borne out by the use of *μαρτις* for disease. It actually implies that disease is a "scourge." The word for healing *σωσειν* implies both salvation in a technical sense and a healing or rescue from danger.²¹

But not only need the healing miracles be Messianic, such an incident as the Stilling of the Storm (4:35-41) has the same overtones. The disciples ask, "Who is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" In Psalm 65:7, such power is ascribed to God alone.²² In the Old Testament the sea was the symbol of the terrible and sinful world. Jesus by manifesting his power over the storm demonstrates not only that he shares the power of God over the mysteries of creation but also over the evil forces of this world.²³ His power is the power of the Messiah.

Montefiore thinks the story of the fig tree (11:12ff.) is a bad example of what faith can do. Actually this miracle might better be called an "enacted parable." As such it is a very good example of the Messianic character of the miracles. To label this miracle as mere evidence of divinity, or example of compassion, or "tale" of a wonder-worker will not suffice. The explanation must lie elsewhere.²⁴ The

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 61-67.

²²Hoskyns and Davey, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

²³Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 54-57.

story is closely related to the cleansing of the Temple where Jesus definitely exhibited his authority to reprimand the people to whom he had come and his position over against the Temple itself. Quite a stir evidently was made over this and the related incidents, since these events precede the actual arrest and crucifixion. The Messianic overtones were quite evident. The fig tree miracle could well be the act of a Messiah showing his power to reject the people who bore no fruit. This rejection was actually a Messianic claim.²⁵

Conclusion

The story of Jesus is a story of action. Closely allied with the message and proclamation which Jesus brought to the people were the works which he performed among them. These works were not the answer to a desire for signs of his connection with God. Jesus felt that his own person was testimony in itself; no more was necessary. The primary significance of the miracles was the Messianic declaration that the salvation of God was now present in Jesus of Nazareth. The works were the works of the New Age; they resulted from the power of the Kingdom which was now working.²⁶ Thus, to the evidence which Mark gives by recording the chief names given to Jesus can be added the testimony of his works. The approach used by Jesus was not a matter of oratory and publicity centered on his being the Messiah. Rather, he adopted a title, Son of Man, which fitted his purpose but was devoid of great popularity. This made possible a true presentation of his work. Then, as he lived and worked

²⁵Hoskyns and Davcy, op. cit., p. 124.

²⁶Ibid., p. 124.

among the people, the signs and powers of the Messianic age were definitely present. It was possible to see that this was the Messiah unless one rejected him personally from the start. Mark, in giving a prominent place to the public ministry is demonstrating even more clearly what is implied in the terms which refer to Jesus: he is the Messiah of God. The dawn of the New Age came when Jesus of Nazareth came.

The Terms of the Teaching of Jesus

I have already mentioned various things which the other teachers of the day said in regard to the very nature of his teaching. John (1:10) records that the people were astonished when they heard Jesus teach, according to him that he had authority as though he were God. The reaction was that he taught with authority. I should like to show that Jesus displayed an air of authority, that he was not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Man, that he was not only God, but also man. This is especially of great importance. The power and authority which he displayed were not only of a divine nature, but also of a human nature. The knowledge and power which he displayed were not only of a divine nature, but also of a human nature. The knowledge and power which he displayed were not only of a divine nature, but also of a human nature.

1. The Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ, the King of the Jews, the Lord of the Sabbath, the Son of David, the Son of Joseph, the Son of Mary, the Son of the Carpenter, the Son of the Nazareth, the Son of the Galilee, the Son of the Judea, the Son of the Syria, the Son of the Parthia, the Son of the Persia, the Son of the Parthia, the Son of the Persia, the Son of the Parthia, the Son of the Persia.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A very important area in constructing a Christology is the teaching of Jesus himself. The purpose of this chapter will be to investigate specifically those aspects of Jesus' teaching which have to bear on his own person and work. Chief consideration will be given to the nature of his teaching, the importance of the parables, the relation which Jesus saw between himself and the Kingdom of God, and his teaching about his work.

The Nature of the Teaching of Jesus

A remarkable distinction between Jesus and the other teachers of his day can be seen in the very nature of his teaching. Mark (1:22) reports that the people were astonished when they heard Jesus teach. According to Mark the fundamental reason for their reaction was that he taught with ἐξουσία.¹ By this he does not mean simply that Jesus displayed an air of confidence. The word is used not only of the right to do something and of the authority given someone, but also can imply an ability. In this sense it is used especially of God's power. Such power can involve supernatural knowledge and both knowledge and power may be expressed by this one word. So the audience concludes from his teaching that he must have ἐξουσία. The phrase κατ' ἐξουσίαν, in accordance with

¹William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), p. 35.

knowledge and power (1:27), belongs to this classification.² In Talmudic literature is a phrase approximating this, "from the mouth of power." This connotes the possession of divine inspiration since the word here used for power is a well known surrogate for *Yareh*.³

"Wisdom" as applied to the teaching of Jesus (6:22) had a background in Jewish thinking indicating a species of insight into reality akin to that of God, if not actually induced by his Spirit. The teaching and miracles of Jesus evidently suggested the presence of a power at work in Jesus of a high kind emanating from God.⁴ This does not mean that the sayings of Jesus are to be equated with the so-called "wisdom literature." Manson disagrees with Bultmann's idea that many sayings are sections of wisdom literature ascribed by the later community to Jesus. He feels that they are much more understandable when referred to Jesus' own situation and seen in their Messianic significance. The teachings are revelatory in character, and even though in form they may be similar to some wisdom literature they are nevertheless best understood in their Messianic situation, according to his view.⁵

From the impression created by Jesus on the crowd, therefore, we note that he was no mere teacher. The people noticed a difference. It

²W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, a translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Woerterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der uebrigen uehristlichen Literatur, 4th revised edition, 1952 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c.1957), p. 277.

³J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), p. 96.

⁴Ibid., p. 96.

⁵Manson, op. cit., pp. 58-61.

is significant that this difference is often connected with his healing ability and miracle working. It helped the people see the difference. The rabbis taught and nothing happened. Jesus taught and all kinds of things happened.⁶ The hand of God was evident not only in the actions of Jesus, but also in his very teaching.

The Significance of the Parables

Jesus often made use of parables. Often the parables are interpreted simply as metaphors or similes to make clear a difficult teaching. Close study of the parables does not completely agree with this. They are more than commentary. Thus, to analyze the parable of the light and the bushel (Mark 4:21f.) as more simile for the Gospel is rather unsatisfying. If the historical situation of Jesus is taken into consideration, then the interpretation could be that he is a bearer of the kingdom and that this fact is in process of being revealed, though now he is in humiliation.⁷ Rudolph Otto maintains that the reason for Mark's inclusion of the parables was to characterize the redemptive person of Jesus just as he had done with the sowing of his labors.⁸ This view could definitively relate the parables to the person and work of Jesus.

The Old Testament background is important in trying to find the purpose of the parables. The selection of themes, even though from

⁶Manson, op. cit., p. 35.

⁷Edwyn Hoskyns and Noel Davcy, The Riddle of the New Testament (London: Faber and Faber, 1949), pp. 127-130.

⁸Rudolf Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, translated by Floyd Filson and Bertram Lee-Wolf (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), p. 86.

Palestine's everyday life, is in the main an Old Testament selection. Even more significant is the fact that these themes have a common ground: they looked forward to a divine event. Sowing, seed, light, harvest, all were common in the Old Testament as prophetic ideas for the future intervention of God. The parables of Jesus seem to presume this significance. With him, however, the themes are no longer prophetic, but Messianic. The parables declare that the divine event is now taking place.⁹

Such a Christological penetration of the parables would make them not so much the illustrations of moral truths, but rather an integral element in the revelation of God. Because of this historical situation, the Greek word, παραβολή, escapes from the Greek idea and takes on rather the meaning which שִׁבְרָה translated by παραβ.λή had in certain Old Testament passages. In such passages as Jer. 21:9 and Dt. 28:37, the word שִׁבְרָה was used to denote Israel as a surprise or byword, a scandal or enigma to the nations. Jesus used parables to present the mysterious truth about himself, in a way which was somewhat of an enigma. He expected the disciples to understand his words; the crowds who refused to accept him could also refuse to see the true meaning of the parables.¹⁰

G. H. Dodd feels that the teaching of Jesus is related to a brief and tremendous crisis in which he is the principle figure and which his appearance has brought about. The parables are to fit this historic situation rather than generalize certain morals.¹¹ This view would also

⁹Hoskyns and Davey, op. cit., pp. 132ff.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 133ff.

¹¹G. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet and Co., 1950), pp. 24-26.

make the parables important because of what they say about Jesus. Although it would be unwise to make every parable conform to such an idea, the historic situation cannot be overlooked.

Thus the best answer to the parables seems to be a Messianic one. As in the miracles, Christology is central. There is the same emphasis on something hidden now, to be revealed in the future. There is also the necessity of recognizing what is now hidden if one is to share in the future glory. The same confidence that this hiddenness is not a covering up of the truth, but its necessary manifestation in humiliation is also present. There is also the same concentration on the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth.¹² The parables are related in the first instance to the historical situation created by the ministry of Jesus. As such they show the secret of what his coming meant to both his contemporaries and to us.¹³

At one point especially there is a close connection between the miracle and the parable of Jesus. The binding of the strong man (3:27) and the healing incident connected with it both emphasize the contest between Jesus and evil; both declare Jesus the master and identify his actions with the advent of the Kingdom of God; both rest on Isaiah's prophecies (Is. 35, etc.) for understanding. This incident may well serve as an example of the relation between parable and miracle. The Christology implied in this situation seems to pervade most of the sayings and actions of Jesus.¹⁴ Jesus testified to himself in both word and deed.

¹²Hoskyns and Davey, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

¹³A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: S&C Press, 1948), p. 54.

¹⁴Hoskyns and Davey, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

It then seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus used the parables to present the hidden truth about himself. The stories were not generalization, but revelation. They did not put an already clear truth in a different way, but brought to light what was hitherto not in evidence. As such the parables were definitely concerned with Jesus himself. He was presenting his Messiahship, because he was presenting the mysterious position which he occupied and the New Age which attended him.

The Relation of Jesus to the Kingdom of God

This is not the place for a deeply detailed analysis of the Kingdom of God concept in the Biblical revelation. For such the reader is referred to an excellent treatment by Rudolf Otto, already quoted in this chapter (cf. footnote 8). Rather the emphasis will be on what Jesus had to say about the Kingdom and his relation to it. The basic idea of the Kingdom of God came from the realization in the Old Testament times that Yaweh was indeed king. He had dominion not only over Israel, but the whole world. The kingship, glory, and honor belonged to him alone. This was his "malkuth." An eschatological dimension was added to this idea in the prophetic expectancies of the end (cf. Is. 24:23). A sharp division between the present and the future really occurred first in the book of Daniel which delineated the Kingdom of God more closely. In the sense of "heaven" the Wisdom of Solomon 10:10 had a transcendent meaning attached to the phrase. In later apocalyptic literature the "otherness" of the Kingdom became even more prominent. The old idea of the malkuth remained, however, and from it came the expression "take the yoke of the malkuth," which was to bow in obedience to God's sovereignty by obeying his laws. Thus there were actually two spheres. One was the "wholly

other¹⁵ expectation of God's future reign; the other was the present rule which God exercised in his faithful people.¹⁵

As Mark sums up the preaching of Jesus, he came announcing that the Kingdom of God has "arrived." By this he did not mean that the usual observance of the Torah was now prominent, but something had happened which had not happened before. In the Septuagint, the word translates the Hebrew naga and the Aramaic n'ta for "reach" or "arrive." The emphasis is on a historical fact. The accounts in Matthew and Luke seem to place John at the dividing line. This is altogether in harmony with the first chapter of Mark. After John, the Kingdom of God has arrived in Jesus.¹⁶ The parables of the Kingdom seem to support this emphasis on the present situation. The sower, the seed, and the mustard seed (Mark 4) all stress something happening now.¹⁷ Otto takes the sower and the seed parables as one and gives the meaning as one: the Kingdom of God grows without man's ability, quietly, secretly, automatically. The process is working mysteriously right now; in heaven this will not be the case.¹⁸ Dodd sees no point in making the two parables one, but emphasizes the harvest in both cases. In the case of the sower, the farmer will not be dissuaded by the bare spots; as for the seed growing secretly, the point is that Jesus is ready to harvest.¹⁹ The view that the parables of Mark have a common object, to confirm the glad tidings of

¹⁵Otto, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁶Dodd, op. cit., pp. 43-48.

¹⁷Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 111.

¹⁸Otto, op. cit., pp. 113-116.

¹⁹Dodd, op. cit., pp. 178, 182.

the Kingdom as a power already at work in Jesus seems to be a good one.²⁰ The parables of the hidden treasure and the costly pearl in Mark 4 present this Kingdom as a good, attractive, winsome thing. As a blessing, it does not demand, but arouses search and exertion by its attractiveness and value. It becomes a goal when the value is realized.²¹ The element of sacrifice should not be overlooked in these two parables. In fact, the stress may not be so much on the value of the Kingdom as on the idea that it is worth the cost. Implicit in this is that the Kingdom is joined with the cause of Jesus. In effect he is telling his followers, "You agree that the Kingdom is good. Here it is if you drop your caution. Follow me."²² Jesus saw the Kingdom as attendant upon his coming.

But Mark also indicates that Jesus preached the Kingdom as still in the future. The reference in Mark 9:27 to "entering" the Kingdom is contrasted to *γένηται* which would indicate an eschatological nature. The statement by Jesus that he would drink new wine in the Kingdom of God (11:25) would also be a reference to the future.²³ The "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13 creates a problem at this point. Dibelius says this chapter came into being because the early Christians wanted a "calendar" for the Kingdom. As such it contained familiar words of Jesus but was not really his work. He points out that Jesus had nothing to do with reckoning. If they really were of God, the people would know

²⁰Otto, op. cit., p. 74.

²¹Ibid., pp. 128f.

²²Dodd, op. cit., pp. 112f.

²³Taylor, op. cit., p. 114.

the times. He wanted a recognition of the times, not a reckoning.²⁴ Of course there is a good deal of truth in this view. The words could still have come from Jesus, however. Jesus himself could have reworked these apocalyptic materials to emphasize the "not yet" rather than the calendar. Taking the crisis of the Temple's destruction and the attendant wars, Jesus uses these events, not to date the end of the age but to warn the people that the times were not set by men but by God.²⁵ In either event, there is ample evidence from Mark that Jesus saw not only the present aspects of the Kingdom, but also its future fulfillment.

In this double view of the Kingdom lay a claim to Messiahship. Jesus spoke of the Kingdom as a new, unique, decisive action of God, but this action was identified with the beginning of his public ministry. He also spoke of it as reaching its full form in the future.²⁶ The Kingdom is thus intimately connected with the life and work of Jesus. This is the position of the Messiah who is to be the instrument of the Divine Breaking In.²⁷ How this actually worked out becomes apparent in a discussion of the way Jesus discussed his work.

The Teaching of Jesus about His Work

Jesus definitely taught his disciples that he must suffer and die. According to Mark 8:31 and 9:31, Jesus "began to teach them that the Son

²⁴Martin Dibelius, Jesus, translated by C. E. Hedrick and F. C. Grant (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1949), p. 70.

²⁵Bowman, op. cit., pp. 55-61.

²⁶F. V. Filson, Jesus Christ the Risen Lord (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 102.

²⁷Manson, op. cit., pp. 46-48.

of Man must suffer." Such a doctrine represented a new teaching. Not only was it new, it was absolutely blasphemous to the Jew. There had always been the idea that suffering now is rewarded later, but this suffering is definitely ascribed to the Son of Man. Jesus does not say "I" must suffer, as though the experience is only a personal misfortune; he teaches that the Son of Man must suffer which gives the fact a Messianic significance. Thus Jesus introduced another new idea in the Messianic role.²⁸ Although the people expected a popular, powerful conqueror, Jesus began to teach that he must suffer and die.

Jesus himself realized that his whole life was to culminate purposefully in his death. To him, however, the suffering was not a meaningless catastrophe; he was doing it for men.²⁹ From the three great passion prophecies (8:31, 9:31, 10:33) as well as from 10:45 and 14:24, it is evident that Jesus faced suffering and death with a clear understanding of the purpose which the Father wanted him to fulfill.³⁰

The disciples were not so enlightened. They recognized him as Messiah by the time of Peter's confession (8:27ff.) but Jesus had to show them his death. Hence the three prophecies in rhythmic pattern after Caesarea Philippi.³¹ The background for these words is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and by using this idea Jesus adds this important task to his role. The disciples knew the Servant must suffer. Jesus by identifying himself with that figure shows that he must do the same.

²⁸Otto, op. cit., p. 247.

²⁹John Knox, Christ the Lord: The Meaning of Jesus in the Early Church (New York: Willett, Clark and Co., c.1945), p. 126.

³⁰Taylor, op. cit., p. 124.

³¹Wilson, op. cit., p. 117.

The "must" is not a blind fatality, it is the inner necessity from his calling. To save is his purpose in coming, and to save is the purpose of his suffering.³²

Two metaphors are important in the teaching of Jesus about his work; both are sacrificial. In 10:45, the price paid for deliverance from sin and judgment is stressed, a "ransom for many." In 14:24, the "blood of the covenant" is central. This ratifies the covenant between God and men causing a relationship of fellowship and obedience based on redemption and reconciliation. These two passages especially determine the case. They show that Jesus thought of his surrendered life as a self-offering to God in the name of men and for their sake.³³

The Last Supper is an even clearer prediction of the death of Jesus and its meaning. On this occasion he refers to the coming death in the symbolic act and interprets it with his words. He shows that it will not be a defeat. He promises that the result will rather be for the benefit of his people and that he will be with them again.³⁴

Thus the work of Jesus centers in the cross. As Messiah, he was no mere political defender, nor even only a transcendent judge, but was in truth the Messiah, because he was to suffer and die for men. According to Mark, the very heart of the mystery is that the glorification of the Son of Man, the supreme apocalyptic event, could only come through the sufferings of the Servant of Isaiah 53.³⁵

³²Otto, op. cit., pp. 249-251.

³³Taylor, op. cit., p. 124.

³⁴Wilson, op. cit., p. 120.

³⁵Manson, op. cit., p. 111.

Thus Jesus pointed his life to the cross. The only good reason for the consistent prominence which the early Church accorded the cross is that Jesus himself made it so.³⁶

Jesus, we may conclude taught concerning his work, that it was to consist in a sacrifice for men and that this was his role as Son of Man, Messiah.

Conclusion

The teaching of Jesus has a definitely Messianic character. The very authority with which he spoke gave evidence of his superior ability. The parables can be understood most profitably in relation to Jesus himself as he presented men with the mystery of the Kingdom of God which had arrived with him and would reach its fulfillment in him. Thus the teaching of Jesus is not to be seen only as the utterances of a famous man; nor was Jesus content to give general rules for holy living. He was concentrating on the repentance of those whom he was addressing because that was important. His listeners were to understand the demand as a sign of the coming kingdom of God, and indeed already present.³⁷ Most important, Jesus taught that the primary nature of his work was in the suffering and death which he must undergo for his followers. His Messiahship consisted in his ransoming men by the blood of the covenant.

³⁶Filson, op. cit., p. 111.

³⁷Manson, op. cit., p. 55.

CHAPTER V

JESUS AND THE OPPOSITION

The ministry of Jesus produced quite a reaction among the people, but not all of that reaction was good. In the preceding two chapters, we have dealt primarily with favorable witness to the life of Jesus. The witness of those who did not follow Jesus is also important. Mark presents this side of the story also. The witness of these conflicts between Jesus and his opponents is also worthy of investigation. Each significant incident recorded by Mark will be studied individually and the apparent conclusions drawn. Several of the "conflicts" have been dealt with in other chapters. These will not be analyzed here.

The first notable conflict occurs already in the second chapter of Mark, where he records the story of the paralytic (2:1-12). The controversy arises because Jesus dares to say, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (2:5). This can be understood either as the exercise of a divine prerogative or merely as the assurance that God offers forgiveness. It is quite clear that the scribes realized that Jesus was not merely offering assurance.¹ This was a situation of healing and to the Jewish mind forgiveness and recovery were connected. They had a saying, "there is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him."² For this there was no real analogy in history. Nathan's

¹Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 261.

²H. B. Swete, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 35.

words (2 Sam. 12:13) show a similarity, but are not a parallel. Nathan names the name of God with the assurance of truth, but Jesus seems to be doing this with only his own person as authentication. This dispels the idea that Jesus was simply stating an assuring thought. Further, not only a knowledge of the case is displayed, action is implied. Forgiveness is tied in with curing and Jesus feels himself able to mediate that forgiveness. The significant feature is that Jesus uses the term "Son of Man" and does it "on earth." This is not a function any man might fulfill. What is more, the action is prophetic and not merely declaratory. The speaker is One from God and endowed with divine *δύναμις*. The claim then is a Messianic one and the incarnation mystery is part of it. The one speaking is in truth the Son of God, but he took the form of a servant, being found in the likeness of men.³ The dispute is a Messianic one and Jesus is definitely understood by the opposition to lay claim to that role.

The disturbance caused in the house of Levi (2:15-17) because Jesus ate with "publicans and sinners," again shows the departure of Jesus from accepted standards. A creative purpose relative to the Kingdom of God can be seen in this incident. Jesus had in mind not merely to accept what he found but to make a change. He describes the change as making the sick whole. This was in direct contrast to the Pharisees' "Birds of a feather flock together" idea. He came not to fall in with the righteous, but to change the sinners. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. In other words, he came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to sinners with a view to making them into the people of

³Taylor, op. cit., p. 201.

God.⁴ This was certainly not the Pharisaic idea of the Messiah. With their nationalistic, royal expectations it is quite natural that they should expect to find the Messiah associating with them and in the position of honor. The whole onigma of Jesus, his humble birth, his refusal to have any sort of band-wagon campaign, was made even worse by the people with whom he was associating. The Pharisees see no possibility of any greatness in this man. Mark, by including their negative reaction, is heavily underscoring the true nature of the Messiahship of Jesus, which is according to God's purpose rather than man's pattern. He came with a task, and that task was Messianic in its true sense, not just in a political connotation.

The next question recorded by Mark is concerned with fasting. The disciples of Jesus did not fast as did those of the Pharisees and John. Jesus answers this question with a reference to the *ὄνα φ105*. According to Taylor, general considerations favor interpreting *ὄνα φ105* as a Messianic expression. Jesus by using this term, was making a silent assumption rather than a public claim. The assumption is that he is the Messiah and the Kingdom is present in him. It is therefore incompatible with a situation so joyous that his groansmen mourn.⁵ In effect he says that in his person as well as his teaching and mighty deeds, the Kingdom of God has come among men. The peculiarly close relationship of his disciples to him determines the rightness and wrongness of what they do. So, in reality he claims to be the inaugurator of the Kingdom of God and

⁴J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), pp. 201-203.

⁵Taylor, op. cit., p. 210.

the relation of men to him determines their relation to that Kingdom.⁶ The parables immediately following serve to substantiate his words, making clear that here is new material. Again, the Pharisees have given valuable testimony in the record of Mark. They have shown that not any one could do as he pleased in the matter of true religion. When an innovator came along he was questioned and opposed. But Jesus meets such opposition with the authority of his own person. He could change because he was the one through whom God was intervening and making the change. He was the bridegroom, the one that really counted.

At first glance, the problem raised by the disciples in eating and plucking grain from the cornfield (2:23-26) is a minor one of breaking a law which was being used too strictly anyway. This is possible. However, there is another aspect which should be considered. In the law of ancient days already, and certainly in Jewish thinking, the Sabbath was a sort of ritual foretaste of the true Sabbath or Messianic Age. This would be the true and eternal Rest. This would give the Pharisees real cause for anger. The actions and attitude of Jesus were such that he appeared to be the lord of the Sabbath. To the Pharisees, this was the usurping of a right that belonged only to the Messiah. Jesus went right along with such an idea but also maintained that the Messianic Age had arrived in him. The reference to David's deed when he was in Nob (1 Sam. 21:1-6) would thus be very appropriate. He appealed to David not only because he was such an illustrious ancestor, but rather because the Messiah is a son of David and David is a type of the Messiah.⁷

⁶Bowman, op. cit., pp. 198f.

⁷A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: SCM Press, 1946), pp. 42f.

The healing of the man with the withered hand would be part of this same discussion. It is interesting that the Gospels contain seven healing miracles done on the Sabbath. Apparently Jesus had healed so often on the Sabbath that the enemies came, not to worship, but to watch. Thus his question, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil?"⁸ The Sabbath must have been a real issue in the ministry of Jesus therefore. On one side was Jesus emphatically and frequently asserting his authority over this day, and on the other were the Pharisees and religious leaders opposing every such assertion. The conflict strengthens what Mark has been saying in other ways. Jesus is definitely making Messianic claims and the opposition of the Pharisees shows just how well they realized that fact. Their witness is negative, but it is still witness.

The idea of kingdoms in conflict (3:23-30) has been dealt with in relation to the teaching and activity of Jesus. However, one other point is very significant. Jesus gives a very strong warning to his accusers about blaspheming against the Holy Ghost, which Mark says was in relation to their saying that he had an unclean spirit (3:30). The charge *βεε Σεβουιλ* *ε'η ει* was directed in fact against the *πνευμα Ιησου* not just the spirit of a man, but the *πνευμα Ιεου* which pervaded and controlled him.⁹ Here it is the very nature of Jesus that is in question. The Pharisees, in trying to account for the supernatural power of Jesus, tried to ascribe that power to *βεε Σεβουιλ* rather than the only other possibility, God himself. Jesus not only denied their statement but asserted his divine nature. By including this story, Mark leaves

⁸Ibid., p. 46.

⁹Swete, op. cit., p. 68.

very little doubt about the true nature of Jesus. The Pharisees were in conflict with the very

The whole section of Mark 7:1-23 shows a distinct contrast between the Pharisees and Jesus on the use of law. The strict piety of the Jews rested upon their interpretation of the "Bible." Jesus used the Bible in refuting them, but he did not derive his message from it. The law could have shown men the will of God if they had used it properly, but they made a legal system of it. Therefore Jesus must now announce what obtains in the Kingdom of God, namely the pure will of God. He did this as one who himself knew the will of God without any supporting argument. To the Pharisees, this was heresy.¹⁰ Jesus acted with the authority of one who was in the closest relation to God. That this was the case, and not just the activity of another teacher, the Pharisees demonstrated by their opposition.

The conflicts in Mark 12 are of this same nature. When Jesus asked about the relation of David to the Messiah (12:35-37) he brought more light into the true nature of the Messiah. Every Israelite held that the promise of eternal sovereignty was given to David. This background of Messianic prophecy appears in Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. In the Psalm of Solomon 17:23 $\omega\iota\sigma\ \Delta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\iota\delta$ occurs for the first time as a title of the Messiah. It is rather frequently used thereafter.¹¹ Many of the contemporaries of Jesus saw the leadership of the great son of David to be both spiritual and political (2 Sam. 7:12,

¹⁰Martin Dibelius, Jesus, translated by C. B. Hedrick and F. C. Grant (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1919), p. 126.

¹¹Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, translated by D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), pp. 316f.

Is. 11:1, Jer. 23:5). Jesus accepted the view in a spiritual sense, but had to be wary of letting the political and military connotations be prominent. The title could give a partly false impression.¹² Thus his question here was to awaken reflection in regard to his true position. As a Messiah who had been called "Lord" by King David, with a throne at the right hand of God, he could be no successor of David in the literal and political sense only. He placed the Messiahship on a much higher key.¹³ Psalm 110:1 is quoted which shows the honor of the Messiah. To think of the Messiah as only a son of David is not enough, in fact it is wrong. His descent is more than that. It is right to call him this only in the sense that Paul uses it in Rom. 1:3, a descendant according to the flesh. His dignity didn't come from that origin, however, it came from his true standing which was at the right hand of God.¹⁴

Of course the greatest conflict was the one that finally cost Jesus his life. Dibelius gives a pretty good summary of this event emphasizing three features.¹⁵ He says that first of all the journey up to Jerusalem was not that of a pilgrim. He was carrying the call of the Kingdom of God from the province to the capital. This is perhaps not as much a movement from the country to the town as Dibelius makes it, but the essential idea seems right. Secondly, the ejection of the traders is considered

¹²F. V. Filson, Jesus Christ the Risen Lord (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 140.

¹³A. E. J. Rawlinson, The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 32.

¹⁴H. Lohse, Mark's Witness to Jesus Christ, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p. 14.

¹⁵Dibelius, op. cit., pp. 92f.

as definitely Messianic by Dibelius. A prophet could do this but there is no indication that Jesus made his stand as a prophet. He did it as himself, the Messiah. Finally the crucifixion had to be a matter of Messiahship. The people, the religious leaders, and the Romans killed Jesus because he laid claim to the throne. He claimed to be the Messianic king.

Conclusion

The life of Jesus was thoroughly permeated with conflict. This very conflict was usually centered on the claims which he made. These claims were objectionable because they were claims which the Messiah alone could make. Jesus was therefore either the Messiah, or an imposter, because he definitely made that claim. In any event, Mark's emphasis on the opposition suggests that large prerogatives were claimed by Jesus.

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSIANIC SECRET

Albert Schweitzer asks the following questions among others in a discussion of the Messiahship of Jesus:

Why does Jesus first reveal His Messiahship to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi, not at the moment when He sends them forth to preach? How does Peter know without having been told by Jesus that the Messiahship belongs to his Master? Why must it remain a secret until the "resurrection"? Why does Jesus indicate His Messiahship only by the title Son of Man? And why is it that this title is so far from prominent in primitive Christian theology.¹

These questions sum up rather well the difficulties which have given rise to the problem of the Messianic Secret. This concept was originally advanced by William Wrede in his book, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien (Goettingen, 1901). Briefly stated, the problem raised by the Gospel of Mark is that there is apparently a definite concealing by Jesus of his Messiahship. According to Wrede, Jesus did not reveal himself as Messiah on earth, but the Church read this into the account at a later date, based on its idea of the resurrection.² Wrede's reason for inventing the Messianic secret was that he was puzzled by the subtlety of the Lord's claims. He felt that the early Church must have believed that Jesus was the Messiah but could find no such claims in his authentic utterances. Therefore the Church said that he told the disciples not to proclaim the fact until after his resurrection.³

¹Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, translated by W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911), p. 332.

²Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1952), p. 122.

³J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), p. 158.

It is not at all impossible that the early Christians knew from the very first that Jesus was the Messiah. The very placard on the cross showed that the claim of Jesus was recognized by the Jewish leaders and by the Romans who were eyewitnesses of the events.⁴ Indeed the crucifixion is unintelligible unless Jesus was condemned as a Messianic pretender. Furthermore, the entry into the city of Jerusalem and the trial before the Sanhedrin, all indicate the existence of a decidedly Messianic tension.⁵

The misunderstanding of the disciples, upon which Wrede based much of his thesis, must be seen properly in its context. Their eyes and ears were blessed above others. Theirs was not so much a lack of understanding as an actual resistance. The resistance was to the fact that the Son of Man must suffer. Such an idea was counter to all expectation. He was the ruler of heaven, the judge, not the suffering one. A close study of the entire Marcan account leads one to believe that Jesus indeed taught about his Messiahship but that the disciples resisted that teaching because it was so foreign to them. Using the distinct title, Son of Man, he presented a role of suffering; the disciples had to learn this from him alone, and they came to the realization very slowly. Thus Jesus alone would be responsible for the promulgation of the doctrine.⁶

A better answer to the problem lies in the view which Jesus had of his Messiahship. To him, it was very important that he be known as the

⁴W. V. Filson, Jesus Christ the Risen Lord (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 75.

⁵Taylor, op. cit., pp. 122f.

⁶Rudolf Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, translated by Floyd Filson and Bertram Lee-Wolf (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), pp. 253-255.

right kind of Messiah. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus told the disciples to wait with the revelation of what they now knew until after his resurrection. This was the key. Only those who believed in him as the crucified and risen Christ could make a true confession of him as Messiah. Even the miracles could not and dared not be understood apart from his death and resurrection; Jesus therefore enjoined silence after many of them. If he only wanted to keep the acts secret, he certainly failed. But Mark's record about the silence enjoined seems to remind his readers that the Jesus who worked in Judea and Galilee was the one who also died and rose again.⁷

In addition to this, Messiahship was to Jesus not only a status but an activity. He was Messiah in the healings, the exorcisms, the suffering, dying and return in glory. Messiahship was that which he did, that which the Father was pleased to accomplish in him. Though Messiah already, he saw that the essential feature of that Messiahship lay in fulfilling his destiny.⁸ His suffering and death were basic.

A final reason for the silence enjoined by Jesus was that by its very nature the knowledge of his Messiahship was incommunicable. He asked others to confess his Messiahship as a product of their spiritual insight, rather than after his own blunt claim which would more than likely bring only scorn.⁹ They were to believe, not merely assent to something they had heard.

⁷B. Lohse, Mark's Witness to Jesus Christ (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p. 57.

⁸Taylor, op. cit., p. 123.

⁹Bowman, op. cit., p. 173.

All this really points to the fact that mere signs, works, or enthusiastic feelings were not a sufficient basis to Jesus for an understanding of his Messiahship. It rather depended on the insight given by God and connected with his central purpose, ransoming the many.

Thus the incident on the road to Caesarea Philippi becomes a focal point. No matter how insufficient the chronology in the Gospel accounts may be, one thing is clear from Mark 8:27ff. and its parallels: the old tradition once distinguished in strictness between a time when Christ did not discuss his Messianic role with the disciples and a time when he did. The two times are separated by the confession of Peter. This shows that the basis had to be a gift from God. Jesus could accept Peter's confession because it came from God. He not only could accept the confession, it was the basis on which he could proceed. The fact that the Transfiguration follows immediately after Caesarea Philippi shows the importance of that confession. What Peter had confessed was there confirmed.¹⁰

Such a view is in accordance with the way Jesus used the Son of Man title. Of the fourteen times the term, Son of Man, is used, twelve are after Caesarea Philippi. Some scholars hold that Jesus used the designation only after this event and that the other two times simply mean "man." This is not necessary. Jesus indeed avoided the title "Messiah" but only because he wanted true insight into his role rather than a wave of excitement resulting from political expectations. His choice of the term, Son of Man, avoided such a danger. Since the title was such a "veil" Jesus could well have used it before Caesarea Philippi without making any

¹⁰Otto, op. cit., pp. 119-223.

specifically Messianic pretensions to his disciples.¹¹ After such a confession as that of Peter, Jesus could then go on to further instruction and explanation as to the exact purpose of the Son of Man.

After Caesarea Philippi, the Messiahship was no longer veiled. It is quite conceivable that the entry and praise given to Jesus (11:9) were Messianic. The greeting, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," was used to greet the pilgrims coming to the feast and quite general. As such it was not necessarily Messianic. Also the phrase "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David," could well be the cry of the exultant people greeting the prophet who proclaimed the Kingdom. Nevertheless, Messianic overtones cannot be completely ruled out. That it was probably a tumultous entry, is seen also in the cleansing of the temple. Jesus could therefore have been seized specifically as a Messianic insurgent. Pilate did not know the doctrine of the Son of Man. He asked, "Are you the king of the Jews." Jesus replied to him with an affirmative. Before the Sanhedrin, however, Jesus definitely associated Messiahship with the Son of Man and laid claim to it.¹² Jesus seems to have realized his Messiahship and laid claim to it. That Jesus did not work for a public reputation as Messiah in his early ministry is not necessarily proof that he made no such claim.

Conclusion

The Messianic confession was a basic part of the very first tradition of the Church. No gap existed between the death of Jesus and the first

¹¹A. M. Hunter, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: SCM Press, 1948), pp. 44f.

¹²Otto, op. cit., pp. 223-225.

proclamation of his Messiahship. This knowledge, however, had to come from Jesus himself. It was hardly possible for the disciples to have used the death as a basic feature simply on their own. Some say the disciples read the suffering endured by Jesus into the Son of Man idea. But Mark implies that the disciples did exactly the opposite and that Jesus alone proclaimed it.¹³ Thus it is not necessary to say that Jesus himself had no intention of proclaiming his Messiahship simply because of the "Messianic Secret." The opposite is rather proved, that even this was part of the deliberate teaching and proclamation of Jesus so that Messiahship on its true plane might be established.

¹³William Manson, Jesus the Messiah (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), pp. 2-10.

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUCTURE OF MARK

A final area of investigation will be the structure which Mark gives to his story. The attempt will be to show that Mark had a unified and consistent goal which he was pursuing.

At first glance, the story seems meagre and theologically lean. Compared with Matthew there is very little ethical teaching and very little of the Kingdom as a growing society. The Sermon on the Mount, the parables of the tares, the net, the laborers in the vineyard, all are missing. In contrast to Luke there is little on prayer; the stories of the seventy, the gentiles, and other accounts which feature the poor and outcasts are also absent.¹

This apparent lack of material, however, only emphasizes the reason for looking at the structure. Mark does not set brevity as his only goal. Often the story is quite pictorial and full. Several times he gives the scene of a narrative (e.g., 4:1). He mentions on another occasion that the grass was green (6:39). Again, he records the fear of the disciples (6:50). These details would hardly be included if Mark only wanted to be brief.²

Mark begins by quoting two well-known Messianic passages (Mal. 3:1, Is. 40:3). These are presented as fulfilled in the mission of John.

¹A. W. F. Blunt, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), p. 52.

²E. P. Gould, The Gospel According to St. Mark, in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner's, c.1896), XXVII, xv.

The connection with Jesus is quite definite; he is the fulfillment of prophecy.

The very next event recorded by Mark is a great testimony to the divine nature of this Messiah as he was called in the first verse. He is called the Beloved Son by God's voice at his baptism. Some look at this baptism in an adoptionistic light, maintaining that εὐδοκῆσα implies a present election, and thus ruling out a pre-existent condition.³ Such a view is difficult to maintain. The voice from heaven quotes two separate passages from the Old Testament. The first part is a coronation formula for the Messianic king (Ps. 2:7), the second is the ordination formula for the Suffering Servant (Is. 42:1). This combination could at once anoint the Messianic king and ordain the Suffering Servant. Thus, Mark indicates already at this early point that the very nature of the Messiahship of Jesus issued in the cross, a theme certainly consistent with the whole book. At no point is it necessary to think of this as a new revelation to Jesus. The King's son does not need to be told who he is when he ascends the throne. Furthermore, the Servant is confirmed here, not instituted. The official confirmation is hereby placed on the Messianic role of Jesus as both ruler and servant; this theme is developed later in the book.⁴

The story of the temptation which immediately follows the baptism, bears out this Messianic significance. Confirmed as Messiah, Jesus is now tempted to take some other way to fulfillment of his role rather than

³Blunt, op. cit., p. 77.

⁴J. W. Bowman, The Intention of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), pp. 38-40.

the way of suffering which has just been presented to him.⁵ The account in Mark simply records the event and significantly shows that it is a battle with Satan which the Messiah must face. This opposition is very prominent in the rest of Mark as he shows the conflict between Jesus and the demons.

With such an assertion of Divine Sonship and Messianic role, Mark then presents the historic manifestation of this Christ. He comes with the message that the kingdom of God has arrived and asks for repentance and belief in the Gospel (1:15). This is carried out as Jesus calls the first participants in the New Age, the four disciples. From this point on, the mighty working of the Kingdom of God is evident. Mark records not only significant works but also gives the reaction of the people in many instances. Their impression underscores the account. By his constant emphasis on the opposition of the demons Mark evidently tries to show that this is a war between two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan (3:20ff.). Not only the opposition of Satan, the enmity of the Pharisees and scribes is also introduced at an early stage. As seen in chapter five, this opposition arises primarily because the actions and claims of Jesus were specifically Messianic. Thus the early period shows Jesus as at one time popular and hated. Both reactions were due to his unusual role.

In the fifth chapter of Mark, the withdrawal of Jesus from his own country stresses again the war between him and the kingdom of Satan, but also shows the importance of faith in him as indicated by the stories of Jairus and the diseased woman. This is almost anticipatory to the rejection

⁵Ibid., pp. 38-40.

by his own country as vividly portrayed in chapter six. A definite glimpse of what all this will lead to is given in the sending of the twelve (6:7ff.); the pericope about Herod and John is entirely in line with the tenor of rejection.⁶

The real climax in the Gospel is the confession of Peter on the way to Caesarea Philippi (8:27ff.). All the events really lead up to this point and culminate in the question addressed to the disciples. From this point on, Jesus points his way toward the cross and openly teaches about his suffering and death. Miracles and works become secondary as Jesus prepares for the final task. The Transfiguration (9:1ff.) confirms Peter's confession and emphasizes again the divine nature of this person.

When at last the Lord approaches Jerusalem to offer his sacrifice, the reserve about his Messiahship is thrown away. The cry of the beggar at Jericho (10:47) has Messianic implications at the very least. In the parable of the vineyard Jesus openly represents himself as the beloved son and the heir in the midst of rejection (12:6,7).⁷

This rejection culminates in the last week itself. Mark devotes a major section of his work to the record of these final days. When Caiaphas asks, "Art Thou the Christ?" Jesus replies that he is and adds a prophecy which concerns himself as the Son of Man. It is further as Messiah that he is condemned to the cross; the title "King of the Jews" is but "the Christ" expressed in terms intelligible to a Roman judge.⁸

⁶Swete, op. cit., pp. 119ff.

⁷Swete, op. cit., p. xciii.

⁸Ibid., p. xciii.

This is the final and culminating scene. The abrupt end of Mark gives the fact that Jesus rose. The fact of his resurrection fits the rest of the story perfectly. Jesus the Son of Man was subjected to death as a ransom for the many, but then rose again. He is at one time servant and ruler of all.

Conclusion

Mark has evidently attempted to give a definite presentation of Jesus as the Messiah. First Jesus announces his Messianic Kingdom (after Mark has shown his divine, special position), then displays that Messianic power at work and relates it specifically to himself. After his disciples affirm his Messiahship he leads them into the understanding of it, his suffering and death. In his last days, then, he assumes publicly the Messianic role, goes to Jerusalem with it and dies for that Messianic claim.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The Gospel according to St. Mark is concerned with presenting the historical Jesus of Nazareth as the divine-human Messiah. He further maintains that the nature of that Messiahship is the combination of a Suffering Servant who dies for the people and a royal ruler who is over all. There are a number of means by which Mark presents this basic Christology.

It is significant that Mark makes a careful use of the various names by which Jesus was known. These are not haphazard references but give a many sided picture of this one person. The picture is nevertheless consistent. The crowd recognizes his superior nature, the enemies cannot deny his ability, the demons with their supernatural insight realize that his very nature is divine. That the disciples should actually come to the awareness that Jesus is the Messiah is quite logical, since they were his close associates and followers. The basic witness given by Mark, however, is that of Jesus himself. He adopts a title uncommon in popular Messianic expectations and uses it to present his own distinct character. By using the title, "Son of Man," Jesus not only avoids the danger of political and popular misconceptions, but is able to introduce his true role as a Suffering Servant. Thus, in his very use of names, Mark indicates how Jesus was regarded in his day and how he regarded himself. The latter was definitely as Messiah, but in terms of the Son of Man.

Another emphasis in Mark is on the public ministry of Jesus. Two aspects of this ministry are important, his activity and his teaching.

With regard to the activity of Jesus, the best conclusion seems to be that it is the activity of the Messianic Age. Not only do the crowds recognize that the mighty acts being done are comparable to those predicted by the prophets, the entire activity of Jesus gives evidence of the power of the Kingdom at work. The teaching of Jesus is related to his activity. Jesus, in his teaching, related himself to the Kingdom of God as its bearer and agent. His cause was the cause of the Kingdom. Thus, the parables have a revelatory significance by which Jesus presented the truth of the Kingdom and his relation to it. Throughout the public ministry, Jesus worked and taught as the Messiah who brought the Kingdom of God. An important aspect of this teaching was the instruction which Jesus gave about his suffering and death. Here the Son of Man concept came to the foreground, as Jesus taught that his role was to suffer and die. This is not the denial of Messiahship but its true nature.

Mark includes the frequent encounters of Jesus with the opposition primarily to document and underscore from the other side what he has been presenting throughout. The enemies opposed Jesus because of his Messianic claims and the way he exercised prerogatives allowed only to the Messiah. To say that Jesus made no such claims would hardly do justice to the witness of the opposition.

With regard to the so-called Messianic Secret, it certainly does not seem necessary to believe that Jesus had no pretensions to Messiahship. The better explanation of this problem seems to be that Jesus had to veil his Messiahship until a better understanding of it based on his death and resurrection was reached. The use of the title "Son of Man" served this purpose well. After the disciples came to the conviction that he was the Messiah, Jesus instructed them further about this suffering and death.

Before Caesarea Philippi Jesus allowed his works and person to be the testimony of his Messiahship. After the confession of the disciples, he openly proclaimed his Messianic role.

These are the main elements which make up the Christological emphasis of Mark, as seen by this writer. The suggested conclusion is that the Gospel according to St. Mark presents one consistent picture of a truly historical Jesus of Nazareth who was the divine-human Messiah of God, laying claim to that Messiahship in his public ministry and fulfilling it through his death. As such he rightly forms the basis of our faith.

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