

Chapter 2

THE SON OF MAN IN MARK

The Son of man sayings, both in the synoptics and in the Fourth Gospel, may be grouped in the following categories:¹

- A. *Earthly activity of the Son of man.*
- B. *Sufferings of the Son of man.*
- C. *Glory of the Son of man.*

The following sayings occur in Mark:

- A. 2: 10; 2: 27f.
- B. 8: 31; 9: 12; 9: 31; 10: 33f.; 10: 45; 14: 21; 14: 41.
- C. 9: 9; 8: 38; 13: 26; 14: 62.

A

Mark 2: 10. "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . ." (parr. Matt. 9: 6; Luke 5: 24).

It is unlikely that Mark, with which alone we are at present concerned, uses the expression Son of man with more than one meaning. It can safely be asserted that primarily, and perhaps even solely, the phrase has an individual meaning. There is no support in the other Markan occurrences, except possibly 2: 28, for taking the phrase to denote "man" in general,² and as a misunderstanding of the Aramaic *bar nāšā'*.³ There are examples of men pronouncing forgiveness in the name of God,⁴ but more

¹ For similar groupings of the synoptic sayings see, e.g., *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, i (1920), 375f.; Bultmann, *Theology* i (1952), 30; Sjöberg 234-36; Fuller 96f.; J. Héring, *Le royaume de Dieu et sa venue*² (1959), 90ff.; J. Knox, *The Death of Christ* (1959), 88ff.

² The idea of man having authority on earth to forgive sins "is alien to the mind of Judaism and of early Christianity", Taylor, *Mark* 199.

³ Manson, *Teaching* 214.

⁴ E.g. Nathan (2 Sam. 12: 13); the priests act as intermediaries between God and the people by offering sacrifices.

than that is involved here. No reference is made by Jesus to God's forgiveness, although of course this is implied by the passive verb. He announces the forgiveness, which is tantamount in the eyes of his opponents to claiming to forgive sins on his own authority. But this is the prerogative of God alone.

It is conceivable that Jesus is speaking of the Son of man as another figure, the Son of man in heaven who, he declares, forgives sins on earth through himself as his representative.¹ This, however, can only be maintained if all the Son of man sayings other than those in category C are judged unauthentic. Suspicion is aroused by the awkward construction of the passage, especially verse 10, "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he says to the paralytic—"I say to you . . ." The words "he says to the paralytic" are a repetition from verse 5, and if everything in between is omitted the story becomes a healing miracle with no mention of the forgiveness of sins. There can be little doubt, however, that not the evangelist but the tradition he has incorporated is responsible for the composite nature of the pericope, a combination of a miracle story and a pronouncement story. To what is the combination due? Has the pronouncement story (verses 5b-10a) as strong claims to substantial historicity as the remainder of the pericope? Opinions are sharply divided. The only other place in the synoptics where Jesus forgives sins is Luke 7: 36-50, which has difficulties of its own which need not concern us here.

But two points should be noticed. In both passages the declaration of forgiveness is in identical terms, "Your sins are (have been) forgiven"; in both the pronouncement of forgiveness is criticized by Jewish religious leaders—in Mark by the scribes, in Luke by "those who were at table with" Simon the Pharisee, presumably other Pharisees—as at best an irresponsible presumption, at worst as sheer blasphemy. It is surprising that the gospel record of this topic is so meagre if it played, shall we say, as prominent a part in the ministry of Jesus as the problem of sabbath observance. In Mark the Son

¹ Cf. R. P. Casey in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: Studies in honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (1956), 60, and *JTS*, n.s. 9 (1958), 265.

JESUS AND THE SON OF MAN

of man, in Luke Jesus forgives sins. We see here the earlier¹ and the later forms of the church's justification for pronouncing forgiveness. The Lord himself had done so. Later still this power is attributed to a direct commission from the risen Christ. "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven" (John 20: 22, 23).² Matthew's conclusion to our narrative reflects the same conviction. "They glorified God, who had given such authority to men" (Matt. 9: 8).

There is no need to deny that the question of forgiveness of sins may well have been a point at issue between Jesus and his religious opponents, and that this narrative is evidence of the fact. But in the story of the paralytic (as well as in that in Luke 7) the words "Your sins are forgiven" have come to be regarded as an ecclesiastical formula of absolution, and the association of the pronouncement story in Mark 2 ("the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins") with the healing narrative was made in order to combat Jewish objections to the church's claim to pronounce forgiveness, by appealing to the authority of Jesus as the Son of man.

It follows that this Son of man saying must be put on one side when we are considering the meaning the term had on the lips of Jesus. Here it is the church which is speaking.

Mark 2: 27f. "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; so the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath" (parr. Matt. 12: 8; Luke 6: 5).

The first question to be settled is that of the correct text. Matthew and Luke do not reproduce verse 27, which is also omitted in Mark by D it. W sys omit the words "and not man for the sabbath". Despite these facts there is no real reason to question the originality of verse 27.³

What is the connection between the two verses in Mark?

¹ E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (1954), 54, points out that only here in the gospels is forgiveness of sins associated with the name Son of man.

² Cf. the power of binding and loosing conferred upon Peter (Matt. 16: 19) and upon all the disciples (Matt. 18: 18); A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel according to St Mark*⁷ (1953), 24.

³ As is done by E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* i (1921), 106, n. 1.

THE SON OF MAN IN MARK

On the most satisfactory answer to this question depends the decision as to whether Jesus uttered the whole saying or either of its two parts. It may be added that the reason for the omission of verse 27 by the Western text of Mark and by Matthew and Luke may be the same difficulty as is felt by modern critics in finding a satisfactory connection with verse 28.

One way is to take "man" in verse 27 and "Son of man" in verse 28 as having the same meaning in the underlying Aramaic, *bar nāšā'* having been misunderstood in one of its two occurrences. Manson formerly held that the misunderstanding arose in verse 28, where *bar nāšā'* meant man in general, as in the preceding verse.¹ But this is unlikely, since it is difficult to imagine either Jesus or the early church claiming man's lordship over the sabbath.

Another way, later adopted by Manson in place of his earlier view, is to find the misunderstanding of *bar nāšā'* in verse 27, and to translate, "The sabbath was made for the Son of man, and not the Son of man for the sabbath".² Like his earlier suggestion, this does provide a good connection of thought between the two verses. The starting point is Rabbinic teaching about the sabbath as summed up by R. Simeon b. Menasya (c. A.D. 180) in the pronouncement, "The sabbath is delivered to you [the Jewish nation], not you to the sabbath". The saying of Jesus, as interpreted by Manson, is a kind of Christian counterpart to this, the Son of man being Jesus and his disciples. This is a further application of the collective view of the term Son of man which, in Manson's opinion, Jesus derived from the figure "like a son of man" in Dan. 7: 13, where it is equivalent to "the people of the saints of the Most High". But it is for this very reason that I do not believe this explanation to be the correct one. There is no compelling evidence in the gospels for the collective meaning of the Son of man.

The solution lies elsewhere than in attempts to preserve a tolerable sequence of thought between the two verses by postulating a misunderstanding of *bar nāšā'* in one or other of them. It may be that verse 27 records a genuine saying of

¹ *Teaching* 214; cf. also C. C. Torrey, *The Four Gospels*, 73.

² *Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 11 (1947), 138-46.

Jesus. This is not certain, although its presence provides the pronouncement characteristic of stories such as this. The saying in verse 28 is a creation of the early community, which saw in the story about David a messianic meaning. If David, in eating the shewbread, showed himself as it were lord of the sabbath, how much more is this true of David's descendant, the Messiah. The saying, "The Son of man is lord even of the sabbath" is, therefore, a Christological affirmation like Mark 2: 10, and was perhaps provoked by Pharisaic criticism of inadequate sabbath observance on the part of the Palestinian community.¹ If this is right, the absence of a fully satisfying connection of thought between the two verses is readily explicable.

B

Mark 8: 31. "The Son of man *must suffer many things, and be rejected* by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, *and be killed, and after three days rise again*" (parr. Matt. 16: 21; Luke 9: 22).

Mark 9: 12. "And how is it written of the Son of man, that he *should suffer many things* and be treated with contempt?" (par. Matt. 17: 12).

The un-italicized words after "rejected" are attributable to the influence of the passion and resurrection narrative.

It is a remarkable fact that, with hardly any exception, the synoptics do not represent Jesus as referring to his sufferings and death in the first person singular except in metaphorical language. Besides the obvious allusions to his death in the words spoken over the bread and wine at the Last Supper, he asks James and John if they can drink the cup he must drink or undergo the baptism which will be his (Mark 10: 38, par. Matt. 20: 22), he speaks of the baptism which awaits him (Luke 12: 50), and alludes to his death as a "going" (Luke

¹ Since this was written F. W. Beare has made a similar suggestion ("The sabbath was made for man?" JBL 79 (1960), 130-36). But I do not find convincing his view that verses 23-26 were written as a setting for the affirmation in verse 28.

13: 32f.).¹ The exceptions turn out on examination to be sayings which cannot be accepted as authentic utterances. Moreover, they all three occur in Luke. The most important one stands in Luke 22: 15, "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer". This is the sole instance in the gospels where Jesus uses the word "suffer" in the first person singular. The saying, therefore, can hardly be in its original form, but has been influenced by the language of the church in the Lukan tradition of the Last Supper.² The second instance is in Luke 22: 37, "For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was reckoned with transgressors' ". This is a quotation of Isa. 53: 12 in language almost identical with the LXX,³ and is therefore to be attributed to the church or to the evangelist. The third example consists of words attributed to the risen Christ, and so is to be regarded in the same way. "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24: 44).

Twice in Luke 24 the risen Jesus speaks of the necessity, based on scripture, of the sufferings of *the Christ*. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24: 26f.). The form of expression of the idea of scriptural warrant for the Christ's sufferings, ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν, recurs only in Acts 17: 3.⁴ While the verb "suffer" is of course found outside the Lukan writings in reference to Christ,

¹ On the perhaps originally shorter form of this saying see Fuller 62f.; but cf. Black, *Aramaic Approach* 152f. The word πορεύεσθαι occurs in Luke's version (22: 22) of Mark 14: 21 (ὑπάγει). Cf. also more veiled allusions in Mark 2: 19(20); 12: 1-9; 14: 8, 27. E. Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (1960), 139f., regards Luke 12: 49f. and Mark 10: 38 as sayings of the *mashal* type, to which belong also the eucharistic words (185, n. 28; John 12: 24 is also included by him among the authentic utterances of this type). He is even prepared (141) to accept the substantial genuineness of Mark 8: 31; 9: 31; 10: 33f., except for the mention of resurrection which was reshaped later by the church from words "probably cast originally in the form of a *mashal*".

² Cf. my book, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (1952), 47: "The word 'suffer' without any object may well be due to this cause"; cf. Luke 24: 46; Acts 1: 3; 3: 18; Heb. 2: 18; 13: 12; 1 Pet. 2: 21, 23; 3: 18 (v. l.); 4: 1; G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* (1929), 127f.

³ καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων (LXX ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις) ἐλογίσθη.

⁴ But cf. Acts 26: 23, παθητὸς ὁ Χριστός.

the subject is never ὁ Χριστός.¹ The second passage in Luke 24 reads, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead" (verse 46). The expression παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν recurs only in Acts 3: 18 and 17: 3. What is said about the necessity of the suffering of the Christ in the two passages in Luke 24 has very close parallels to what is said in Mark about the necessity of the suffering of *the Son of man*.

- a { Luke 24: 26, οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν . . .
 Mark 8: 31, δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν.²
- b { Luke 24: 46, οὕτως γέγραπται παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν.
 Mark 9: 12, καὶ πῶς γέγραπται ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου,
 ἵνα πολλὰ πάθῃ καὶ ἐξουδενηθῇ;³

Only in Mark 9: 12 is it said in so many words that scripture prophesies the sufferings of the Son of man. Yet it is obvious that δεῖ in Mark 8: 31 means scriptural necessity, as Luke 24: 25-27 and Acts 17: 2f. clearly bring out.⁴

We have, therefore, in Luke and in Mark, two pairs of very similar sayings relating (a) to the necessity (δεῖ) of the sufferings of the Christ and of the Son of man respectively, and (b) to the scriptural warrant for this (γέγραπται). In the traditional form the distinction has been expressed thus: "The Son of Man must suffer", said Jesus as he taught his disciples: 'the Christ must suffer', said the Christian preachers as they proclaimed the scriptural doctrine of the Messiah, now fulfilled in Jesus' death and resurrection."⁵

¹ Except by implication in Heb. 5: 8, from verse 5; cf. 2 Cor. 1: 5, τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

² Cf. Luke 17: 25.

³ Since these words break the continuity of the preceding and following statements, with which they have no necessary connection, they may be an isolated logion (cf. their omission in par. Matt. 17: 11 which is, however, compensated for in verse 12b). The same thing applies to Mark 14: 21, which resembles this logion. J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (1903), 76, accepts the variant in D, εἰ Ἠλείας instead of Ἐλείας μὲν. With verse 13 the meaning then is that Elijah (John the Baptist) also died in accordance with scripture instead of removing the difficulties in the way of the Messiah, as the scribes mistakenly thought the scriptures foretold that he would; cf. Sjöberg 129, n. 2.

⁴ Cf. Matt. 26: 54, πῶς οὖν πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ ὅτι οὕτως δεῖ γενέσθαι; On this meaning of δεῖ see W. Grundmann, *TWNT* ii. 22ff.; E. Fascher, "Theologische Beobachtungen zu δεῖ", *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*, Beiheft 21 zur ZNW (1954), 228-54.

⁵ A. Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (1958), 134.

Whether Luke's use of the title Christ, and especially of "the Christ" (Acts 2: 31; 3: 18, 20; 4: 26; 5: 42; 8: 5; 9: 22; 18: 5) is derived from primitive usage or is Lukan,¹ it is certainly true that it is retrospective. This is shown by the fact that it is the *risen* Jesus who in Luke 24 speaks of the scriptural necessity for the sufferings of the Christ. The first part of the quotation above will need drastic modification in the light of what has been said about the correspondences between the two Lukan sayings and Mark 8: 31 and 9: 12. These Son of man sayings also must be regarded as expressions of Christian belief rather than as words of Jesus. They must be very early, perhaps earlier than or at least contemporaneous with their counterparts about "the Christ" (if these are not purely Lukan). This is because of the actual term Son of man, an expression which Jesus certainly employed, though not, as we shall see, and as already we begin to see, as regards his passion.

Mark 9: 31. "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and when he is killed, he will rise after three days" (parr. Matt. 17: 22f.; Luke 9: 44).

It seems reasonable to assign the three predictions of the passion of the Son of man in Mark 8: 31; 9: 31; and 10: 33f. to the creativity of the primitive community.² But does this involve "carrying back the Hellenistic kerygma [of Jesus' death and resurrection] into the preaching of Jesus" himself?³ The difficulty here is the very term Son of man itself. Why should the *Hellenistic* community have perpetuated the use of this almost unintelligible Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *bar nāšā'*? Was it simply in order to lend verisimilitude to its creations by employing a title which, according to the old Palestinian tradition, Jesus had used in other connections, even though it had become, so to speak, out of date and fundamentally unsuitable in a Hellenistic milieu?⁴

¹ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke* (1960), 171, n. 2. J. C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting* (1961), 118ff., explains the Lukan usage in the light of second-century Christian and Jewish disputes about the identity of the Messiah.

² "sekundäre Gemeindebildungen", Bultmann, *Tradition* 163; "*vaticinia ex eventu*", Bultmann, *Theology* i. 29.

³ Bultmann, *Theology* i. 83.

⁴ Such a process would be the fabrication of "Aramaic 'antiques'", in the pointed phrase of Richardson, *op. cit.*, 133. Nevertheless, this process did exist, though only to a limited extent.