

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

For some time my particular attention has been claimed by the *Gospel tradition of Jesus as the Messiah*. It has been engaged, as I might also put it, by *whether Jesus saw himself as Messiah and so represented himself*. But I prefer the first formulation.

The two questions can indeed be identified with each other but in one sense they can also be separated.

For instance, one can imagine a very unfavourable evaluation of quite clearly messianic materials in the Gospels, and yet also a failure even then to settle the question of Jesus' messianic consciousness. Examination of the available tradition is, however, the subject which immediately concerns us. In the pages that follow, the reader will find a treatment of one of the variety of problems it embraces. My intention is to supplement this with further studies on the subject. I hope to introduce some new points of view into the discussion of the problem I am now broaching. For at present it is a non-starter in theological circles and simply has not been handled as I am attempting to handle it.¹

I have called the work "at the same time a contribution to the understanding of the Gospel of Mark"; and I do in fact put some weight on the sub-title. My original intention was to write a special study on the plan of Mark. But the contents of this would have been too much in alignment with the work on the main theme for the separation to have been fruitful. My only hope is that I have succeeded in so effecting the unification of the subjects that everything said about the Gospel of Mark really will be of value for the understanding of the main theme.

I have frequently been pained by the thought that my investigation raises questions about so many things on which good, pious people have placed all their trust. I have remembered old

¹ The extent of my awareness of having had predecessors may be judged from Excursus VII.

friends, kind listeners, children of God both known and unknown to me, who might see my work. However, I have been unable to alter anything here. We cannot change the Gospels; we must take them as they are. If anyone wishes to call my criticism radical on this account, then I have nothing against it. I rely on the fact that things themselves are sometimes most radical and that one can therefore hardly be legitimately reproached for depicting them as they are. On the other hand, I reject the charge of offering a "negative" criticism in the one reasonable sense the word can have: my entire endeavour has at least been the very positive one of illuminating a small but, as I believe, important portion of descriptive history as well as I could.

My endeavour is to be open-minded towards objections. It can be taken for granted from the start that much will require correction. But the common complaint, that the Gospel tradition cannot be of later date to the extent I assume, will not put me off. History teaches that after the earliest Gospels were written down extraordinary changes in the picture of Jesus still took place. I cannot imagine why previously it should not have been so. No *a priori* judgement can be made on the value of the Markan transmission, for we are entirely without the means of checking it against other sources. It must therefore be held possible that the oldest written material which tells us of Jesus, and which came to have a dominant influence on what came later, has incorporated much more than we could desire of the secondary tradition that had already accumulated, and much less of the good material. For the rest, I do not wish to leave it unrecorded that my attitude towards other portions of the Gospel materials, and particularly towards the "sayings" of Jesus, is essentially different from that towards the elements I am dealing with here. All in all I should like my readers to observe the limits I have myself delineated in this work. The subject frequently leads us on to questions of wider impact; these I have tried to eschew as far as possible.

I should have been glad to forgo explicit debate with other viewpoints, but it seemed necessary, to permit clear perception of the position which has gradually become mine, which is one of opposition to the usual critical treatment of the Gospels. I

must beg forgiveness for quoting old editions of a series of well-known works, these being the one form in which they were available to me. The effect will doubtless be inconsiderable. I do, however, regret having been unable to make more use of the *Handcommentar zu den Synoptikern* in the form which its worthy author has now given it. Oscar Holtzmann's *Leben Jesu* I unfortunately encountered only when my work was already finished. This work, of course, generally champions the very positions I have particularly challenged (cf., e.g., pp. 54f., 57, 249ff., 273).

Some excursions have been added in order to make the presentation less cumbersome.

I have very frequently—and sometimes several times over—given quotations verbatim. This was to study the reader's convenience, but also to compel him to have before him a vivid picture of the texts.

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