

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

William Wrede

Wrede was born on 10 May 1859 at Bücken in Hanover. He became an associate professor at Breslau in 1893, and full professor in 1896. He died in office in 1906.

A radical by instinct, his methodology was self-consciously worked out, as his 1897 book *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie* clearly shows.

For him New Testament theology is to be based not on the canon, but on history. The relationship of the New Testament documents to the "complex of tradition and history that lies back of them" is a problem and the documents "are to be studied not as literary witnesses to an ideological development . . . , but as exponents of a stormy event whose actual unfolding reveals itself in them as their presupposition".¹

Jesus' life is known to us only through the tradition of the Church and New Testament theology has to consider not just Jesus and Paul, but the transition from Jesus to early Jewish and Gentile Christianity and only then the work of Paul.

Such presuppositions as these are set to work in the book we have before us, published in 1901 as *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*.

The Messianic Secret

Wrede objects to the interpretation of *Mark* on the basis of inadequate psychological surmise. The contrast between the public nature of Jesus' miracles and his injunctions to secrecy in this Gospel requires some other mode of explanation. Whatever moderns may say, Mark is "wholly unaware" of the

¹ G. Strecker, "William Wrede. Zur hundertsten Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages", ZThK 1960/61, p. 71. The translation is by Prof. S. MacLean Gilmour, and the summary of Wrede's life and interests given here is partly drawn from the article by Strecker.

notion of a Jesus who, assuming messiahship at baptism, keeps it secret for much of his ministry till, after the confession of Peter, he introduces the disciples to the idea of a suffering and dying Messiah.

Mark's picture shows the influence of the faith of the early Church at various points and is not neatly self-consistent.

In the Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as concerned to veil his mission and the disciples are the recipients of revelations by him which they do not understand. These two factors are resolved in the picture of the Resurrection as ending the self-concealment of the Messiah and giving the disciples their commission to proclaim Jesus as Messiah to the world.

The idea of such a secret can be shown, from a study of the other Gospels, to have developed variously, and above all to go back to a period prior to Mark's work as the earliest Evangelist.

Wrede finds the theological source of the idea of a secret about the messiahship in a contrast between what the Church came to think of Jesus and how his life had been understood during his ministry. According to him, because the Church came to *think* of Jesus after the Resurrection as Messiah they came to explain lack of explicit declaration of his messiahship by Jesus during his ministry by the suggestion that (nevertheless) Jesus had after all *secretly* revealed his messiahship.

The doctrine of the messianic secret is "the after-effect of the idea of the Resurrection as the beginning of Jesus' messianic office". Further: "if this doctrine could have arisen only at a time when nothing was known of any open claim on Jesus' part to be Messiah, this seems to be positive evidence 'that Jesus actually did not represent himself as Messiah'."²

It will be seen that it is important to decide whether Wrede is right to suppose the doctrine has a *theological* starting-point of this kind as well as to check his conclusion that such a theology must involve a lack of messianic claims on the part of Jesus.

Nevertheless we can hardly question the correctness of his insistence that there must be a historical approach to the

² *op. cit.*, p. 77.

Church's tradition if there is not to be naïve misunderstanding of the perspective from which the Gospels were written.

Foreshadowed in his work are both form-criticism and redaction criticism.³ Foreshadowed too is the preoccupation of German New Testament theologians with what we have come to know as the Easter Event.

Alongside this sensitivity for literary form and forms, too, we find a keen, pragmatic responsiveness to *Religionsgeschichte* which, if in part reconstructed *from* the literature, is basic to seeing it in perspective. The Christian community in its world setting "served as a creative and formative agent in the transmission of the Gospel tradition".⁴

It might not be too much to say that, setting aside the greater self-consciousness of modern hermeneutics—informed as it is by the work of men like Dilthey and Collingwood—Wrede's *methodology* was not merely trend-setting its own day but has remained determinative for New Testament work right up to the present.

It is only reasonable, however, that the results procured by his methods should have been more debatable than the methods themselves.

*The "Secret" since Wrede*⁵

It is not necessary to undertake an exhaustive review of subsequent literature in order to press home the continuing importance of Wrede's work. But there is some value in discovering what approaches derivative from him have been overplayed, and which might have merited more attention. To this we now turn.

A great danger in Wrede's standpoint is that emphasis on the theologising activity of the early Church may lead us to picture such theologising as something autonomous in relation to Jesus' own theologising activity. This ought not to be so; yet the mere fact that we have documentary material that

³ Strecker, *op. cit.*, p. 78, has a useful summary of Wrede's work on *John*, which is relevant to this.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵ From this point on the Introduction is independent of Strecker's article.

points to a Church theology, or cluster of theologies, through which all our factual material about Jesus has already been filtered will again and again tempt us to overlook the probability of theological continuity between his thought and theirs. Item after item becomes a "creation of the Church"—which it might well enough in some instances be—with little deference to the creativity of Jesus himself. The objection can be carried a stage farther back. Wrede was sensitive to *Religionsgeschichte*: yet he and many after him have preferred the notion that the "secret" was a theological bridge constructed by the Christian community from the non-messianic life of Jesus to the Church's messianic understanding of that life; they have preferred this to explaining the secret as an element in Jewish *Religionsgeschichte* of which Jesus himself can have made use. We had to wait for Sjöberg for a corrective to this, though his view has not commanded wide acceptance.⁶

There is hope from another angle than that of Sjöberg's work that fresh attention will be paid to the place of Jesus' ministry in Jewish *Religionsgeschichte* and to the connection of Church theologising with both. This hope derives from the recent pre-occupation of certain New Testament theologians with the validity of the quest of the historical Jesus.

This can be traced back to another emphasis of Wrede's. In stressing Mark's theological inheritance he contributed to the raising of doubts about the use of *Mark* for constructing a life of Jesus.

On a different tack from Wrede, Albert Schweitzer made a similar point in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (E.T., 1910).⁷

Now it is well known that after spending much energy demonstrating the impropriety of constructing a life of Jesus in the fashion of the older "liberals" Schweitzer uses material in *Matthew* rather than *Mark* to help him outline a picture, albeit not a full-scale biography, of Jesus as he sees him.

⁶ Erik Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch*, Lund, 1946, and *Der verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien*, Lund, 1955.

⁷ On p. 328ff. of this work Schweitzer provides his own analysis of Wrede's "thorough-going scepticism" and compares it with his (Schweitzer's) "thorough-going eschatology" (often spoken of as "consistent eschatology").

Schweitzer's Jesus interprets his life against the background of Jewish eschatology, and the author is at pains to show that three crucial items of Gospel narrative are recognised by Wrede himself as ill to reconcile with a merely literary-theological (as opposed to eschatological) understanding of *Mark*. These items are Peter's Confession, the Entry into Jerusalem and the High Priest's knowledge of Jesus' messiahship.

Thus Schweitzer eschews old-fashioned biography of Jesus while stressing (rightly) the difficulty of accounting for some messianic material in the Gospels as nothing but the literary or theological creativity of the early Church rather than something in Jesus' historical situation. "It is difficult to eliminate the 'Messiahship from the 'Life of Jesus' . . . ; it is more difficult still . . . to bring it back again after its elimination from the 'Life' into the theology of the primitive Church"⁸; and later on the same page: "But how did the appearance of the risen Jesus suddenly become for them a proof of His Messiahship and the basis of their eschatology? This Wrede fails to explain"

This fundamental question, stated so clearly by Schweitzer, has rarely if ever received justice from succeeding generations of radicals. Why should *messiahship* be the appropriate dignity for the raised, any more than for the crucified, Jesus? Think of the disadvantages to the Church in having to cope with explaining that Jesus was a *messiah* at all, rather than something else!

Because Schweitzer's preference for *Matthew* over *Mark* has not seemed justifiable to many in the light of dominant trends in source and form criticism, his picture of an eschatologically conscious Jesus has not received the consideration it might on other grounds merit. It is largely in the circle of scholars like Buri and Werner that his "consistent eschatology" has been developed further. Yet whatever its weaknesses may be, this picture does help us to take seriously the continuity of Jesus' thinking with that of his environment, and the continuity of his followers' theologising with his own.

By contrast form and redaction criticism, reinforcing

⁸ *op. cit.*, p. 343.

Wrede's insight into the part played by the post-Easter Church in the growth of the thought behind the Gospels, have sometimes seemed to erect a sort of iron curtain behind which the life of Jesus must remain for ever veiled in mystery. This curtain is the Easter Event itself.

Now recently in reaction to this scepticism scholars such as Ernst Fuchs and J. M. Robinson⁹ have sought to replace the iron curtain by something more diaphanous. It has been suggested that while the old lives of Jesus were indeed on the wrong track form criticism is not so radical but that it leaves us with a modicum of material going back to Jesus. From this material we can see him reacting to his situation in history, producing a kerygma. We shall label this kerygma k^1 and note that there is debate about how far it contains an *implicit christology*.

Now form-criticism often leads to the conclusion that the Church affixed the christological label to Jesus first of all in *its* kerygma, which was a *post-Easter* kerygma, and which we shall label k^2 .

Part of the recent discussions on the historical Jesus has its focus on how far k^1 and k^2 are consistent with each other. Hence the point that k^1 may be implicitly christological.

In this discussion unfortunately the full force of the term "christology" is sometimes lost. We can speak of it in k^1 and k^2 without remembering that it is not the same as soteriology. Soteriology is a wider term. Yet modern theologians often mean just that when they use the other. They read into "christology" nineteen centuries of Christian soteriological connotations foreign to the original Jewish subject-matter of christology, i.e. *discourse about a messiah for the Jews*.

One example of this may be seen in the reinterpretation of "the messianic secret" as a "son of God secret":

At this point it will be enough to suggest that the reasons for this secrecy are to be sought in the very nature and purpose of Jesus' ministry and of the Incarnation itself. To have

⁹ See the convenient summary in R. H. Fuller, *The New Testament in Current Study*, SCM, 1963, pp. 33-67.

allowed the demons' disclosure of his divine Sonship to go unrebuked would have been to compromise that indirectness or veiledness which was an essential characteristic of God's merciful self-revelation.¹⁰

A more direct example of the over-theological approach, this time in the "new quest" of the historical Jesus itself, is to be seen in the tendency to take for granted the presupposition of access through a small quantity of the teaching of Jesus, understood in terms of twentieth-century existentialism, to the Jesus of history (not historiography), in the discussion of k^1 and k^2 . "New questers" (as they have been called) like Fuchs and Robinson are so concerned with existential reinterpretation of these kerygmas that they under-emphasise the relevance to the historical role of Jesus in first-century Palestine in their own discovery of a continuity in early Christian thinking between Jesus and the Church.

The plausibility of the argument in J. A. T. Robinson's *Jesus and His Coming* (SCM, 1957) may, for instance, hinge on whether there really was anything in the first century that swung the Church into an apocalyptic view of his ministry in the fifties. Or again, with a reappraisal of the debatable material on the kingdom of God compatibility of the teaching of Jesus with a Jewish messianic understanding of his ministry *by him* is still worth looking into.

It should be evident that work on Jewish background is just as relevant as an existential restatement of Jesus' and the Church's message; indeed the one needs the other to complement it.

Hence Sjöberg must claim our attention.

It is convenient to preface our discussion of his work with a brief statement on the study of the *Enoch* literature.

Archaeologists have not so far found among the Dead Sea Scrolls those portions of 2 *Enoch* known as the *Similitudes*. Since these speak of the Son of Man they have a bearing on the New

¹⁰ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, CUP, 1959, pp. 79. Cranfield appeals in particular to Bieneck's term *Sohnesgeheimnis* and to the latter's book, *Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker*, Zürich, 1951.

Testament. It has been argued that the *Similitudes* were probably composed later than the time of Jesus and were not drawn upon by him.¹¹ Though not without some impressiveness, dependence on the absence of material from a particular set of finds remains a dangerous argument from silence. And Hindley's attempt to locate the reference to Parthians in A.D. 115-117 (cf. *Similitudes of Enoch*, 56, 57), though plausible, is conjectural and certainly not determinative as it stands.

Furthermore the present state of the Enoch material by no means precludes a long oral and even written history for it, whether in its extant form it is to be dated, with R. H. Charles, in the first century B.C., or with Hindley in the second century A.D.¹²

Given this preamble, it is interesting to note that while Sjöberg concedes that there are several points of time under Roman procuratorial rule in Judaea which would make an acceptable background for the *Similitudes*, he still prefers 40-38 B.C. and regards them as basically a literary unity.

On this literary and historical foundation he constructs his own picture of the sort of eschatological figure the Son of Man was in the circles that gave birth to the Enoch literature and accepts that the term comes to be linked with that of Messiah, however different in origin it may be.

Now one feature of the Son of Man in Enoch is that though he has been hidden from men, he is named before the Lord of Spirits and is a pre-existent being. Sjöberg links the naming of the Son of Man with ancient near-eastern patterns of kingship. Further, "the thought of the divine secrets is central in apocalyptic"¹³ and these secrets have been learned by the "righteous" or the "elect".

¹¹ cf. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea*, SCM, 1959, gives a general picture. J. C. Hindley, "Towards a Date for the *Similitudes of Enoch*. An Historical Approach", *New Testament Studies*, 14.4, July 1968, 551ff., points towards a second-century A.D. date.

¹² R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, Oxford, 1913.

¹³ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, Blackwell, 1956, p. 386, referring to Sjöberg, op. cit., pp. 104ff. Mowinckel's discussion of "the Son of Man" (pp. 346-450) is a helpful introduction to this complex idea.

We may pause to note that among the Rabbis the "name" of the Messiah was thought of as pre-existent, and the notion circulated that he was to be kept *hidden* till the appointed time.¹⁴

Thus there is material in the Jewish tradition which would have made a theology of hiddenness quite natural among those discussing the Messiah, whether in relation to the "Son of Man" or not. Formal proof of the pre-Christian currency of such ideas may be difficult; but we should certainly keep our minds open to their existence as a factor in the growth of Christian thinking. And such ideas would have been of interest to messianic claimants themselves. There is gratuitous psychologising in claiming that the mind of Jesus would never have woven them into his own thinking—though it is just as unwarranted to *assume* that it did.

Now, when Sjöberg deals with Jesus' use of the "Son of Man" terminology, he recognises that "the atmosphere about him is different" from that in the usual ideas about the Son of Man"¹⁵ and he thinks of Jesus adding a *new* element to the concept of the Son of Man in the notion of that figure's suffering, death and resurrection.¹⁶ Also he "finds in the *Similitudes* a pre-Christian foreshadowing of the pre-existence, incarnation, and exaltation of the Son of Man".¹⁷

Here we have a contrast which corresponds to the balance that must be kept between the historical circumstances of the ministry of Jesus and his indebtedness to the Jewish past. (To *his* indebtedness must, of course, be added that of the Church which grew up in the Palestinian and related *milieux*).

Can we describe this balance more precisely than has so far been done?

Jesus and his followers inherited a rich and diversified apocalyptic tradition, to which at least Enoch material, if not

¹⁴ Mowinckel, *op. cit.*, pp. 304ff., summarises the evidence. Wrede notes references to the idea in the works of Justin Martyr.

¹⁵ Mowinckel, *op. cit.*, p. 447, quoting Sjöberg, art. "Jesus Kristus" in *S.B.U.I.*

¹⁶ Mowinckel, *op. cit.*, pp. 448f.

¹⁷ Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, Lutterworth, 1965, p. 40.

Enoch, belonged. This apocalyptic tradition had an eschatological emphasis, and blended easily with other eschatological material connected with the hope of a Messiah. It also contained the notion of a "hidden" eschatological figure and of divine secrets to be revealed to the righteous.

Now alongside this we have the *fact* that Jesus was crucified.

We also know that the Church came to speak of Jesus as the Messiah, *despite* his crucifixion.

Further, alongside the crucifixion the Church placed the Resurrection of Jesus. This item is more difficult than the crucifixion to categorise. Hence its precise significance is often obfuscated by references simply to the "Easter Event" as something which gave impetus to the preaching of Jesus as the "Christ".

What we do *not* know is the extent to which language about the suffering, death and resurrection of the Son of Man on the one hand, and about the secrecy of his messiahship on the other, goes back to Jesus himself.

In our preoccupation with Wrede's insight into the Church's theologising of the ministry of Jesus, we may underestimate the possibility that at least the germs of this theologising can have been present in Jesus' teaching.

This does not mean that we are pleading for a less radical view of Jesus. Our view of Jesus is as radical as Schweitzer's consistent eschatology, though built on different premises.

Both factors mentioned can illustrate the point.

On one hand, the tradition of suffering martyrdom *may* have conjoined with Jesus' sense of impending crisis to produce warnings of sufferings and death from him, but also hopes of vindication.

On the other hand, a belief on his part that he might be the Messiah would naturally enough make him seek to adopt the extant theme of "hiddenness" or "secrecy" to his ministry.

These two *possibilities* can be stated without denying the power of Wrede's critique of *Mark*. But though the *injunction* to secrecy (say) after the cure of Jairus's daughter is absurd in its context, as he rightly points out, it does not follow that the *idea* of secrecy is nothing but ill-fitting theological explanation

of how an "unmessianic" ministry of Jesus produced a christology in the Church after the Easter Event.

Though neither of the possibilities we mention need be right, there is just as much reason to explain the "messianic secret" by one of them as to make it a post-Easter theology lacking their basis in the traditions of Jewish eschatology.

In this connection generally, it is salutary to notice a revival of interest in the background to the Son of Man terminology¹⁸ and perhaps even more to the point to take cognisance of a recent reaction to the spate of contending sceptical assessments of the primitiveness of Son of Man sayings in the Gospels.¹⁹

Finally, in the present context, notice must be taken of an area of comparative studies which, though never decisive in itself, can be illuminating.

We refer to the recrudescence of the idea of a hidden Messiah in post-Biblical Judaism. This notion, known to the medieval rabbis, was actually used by Sabbatai Zevi, a Jew from Smyrna who in 1666 was the centre of a messianic movement.

The interest for us lies in the alleged accompaniments of his messianic self-manifestation. While ultimately there was open proclamation of his messiahship "with signs following" (!), this came after a long period in which it was by obscure hints that he sought to elicit from those around him this recognition of his status. For instance he walked around carrying a fish in a basket because an item of Jewish lore related this to the messiahship. (Interestingly, too, he interpreted punishment from the Jewish authorities as part of the sufferings of the Messiah!) Joseph Kastein in his biography of Sabbatai Zevi speaks of his "symbolic suggestions and secret communications to isolated individuals here and there".²⁰

Now, even after the failure of his public manifestation, the movement he started did not die out. Though under threat of torture the "Messiah" apostatised to Islam, his followers

¹⁸ F. H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History*, SCM, 1968.

¹⁹ cf. I. H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion", *New Testament Studies*, 12.4, July 1966, pp. 327ff.

²⁰ J. Kastein, *The Messiah of Ismir: Sabbatai Zevi*, John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd, 1931, pp. 334ff.

rationalised this by creating a theology, or christology, which saw this "sinfulness" of the Messiah as part of the divine plan for the taking of the burden of the world's guilt upon him. It was further argued that his followers too should conform to other religions. Sociologically this was opportune in the light of Jewish sufferings and enforced conversions in the post-medieval period in Europe.

Sabbatai Zevi has variously been called a mystic, a neurotic and a homosexual; but more than all these and despite them he was a major phenomenon in the Jewish world. Above all, here we have in comparatively recent times a sort of test case for the study of the interaction of tradition, messianic history and posterior theologising.

For one thing we see that a man who could procure a substantial following did so because he lived his life consciously in tune with current Jewish messianic tradition, at least to a degree.

Equally we see that where his doings stepped out of line with such tradition his convinced followers set about reconciling them with the framework of that tradition.

The secrecy motif was by then "old hack" in Judaism, and its employment does not *necessarily* betoken charlatanry or dementia; more to the point is the fact that it could be employed *effectively* at all.

All this drives home the lesson that while the crucifixion of Jesus called for an explanation, this explanation need not have started in a vacuum or have been imposed as altogether foreign matter on existing messianic traditions; further that there may be good sociological reasons for the form taken by the explanation; and finally that the motifs of suffering and secrecy *could* go back to the ministry of Jesus itself, even if also adapted to the crucifixion and its sequel. We have as it were a "*postcedent*" in the career of Sabbatai Zevi and the perpetuation of his movement!

It is indeed not inappropriate to ask how far the very proclamation of the Easter Event might be the consequence rather than the cause of a *christological kerygma* otherwise very hard to explain.

These observations are very tentative and we are fully aware that the literature about Sabbatai Zevi is as much in need of form, source and redaction criticism as are the Gospels. Nothing more is offered than an instructive comparison.

Nevertheless from all we have previously said it would seem proper to suggest that Wrede's position cannot be normative unless it can be clearly shown that the secrecy motif cannot have belonged to Jesus' ministry itself.

Recent Approaches

Cognisance must be taken briefly of some other contributions to the debate.

Bousset saw in the motif an apologetic device to reconcile history with the Gospel; H. J. Ebeling saw it as denying independent importance to history and emphasising the kerygma of the Church and the faith of the Christian; but others again see it as "reflecting the basic theological structure of the history itself (an abstraction which might or might not be consistent with an approach through *Religionsgeschichte*).

Burkill, like Bultmann, still leans heavily on Wrede's original position but also sees the secret as a positive attempt *by Mark* at a theological interpretation of the hidden meaning of Jesus' life and death as those of the Messiah. Conzelmann and others see it as Mark's creation, in which a fundamental theological principle is exhibited that displays the relation between history and the Gospel in assessing the significance of Jesus' person "as the form and content of the Gospel require". This refinement of Wrede's and Bultmann's approach is further developed by Glasswell.²¹

A Methodist scholar, Brian G. Powley, is at present working on a detailed historical survey of the discussion to take account of contributions not touched on by Glasswell, while broadly in agreement with the view that "there is a secret of a kind in the historical life of Jesus in that a Christology was *implicit*, not explicit, in his preaching. Later, after the open confession of

²¹ See an unpublished thesis on the messianic secret by M. E. Glasswell, to which grateful acknowledgement is made for the material from which this little digest, with some changes, is made. Cf. also, for sources, H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (fr. J. Bowden), S.C.M., 1969, p. 138.

Jesus' Messiahship in the post-resurrection church and when it became necessary to write a life of Jesus as the Messiah, the implicit character of the Christology within the ministry was re-expressed in retrospect in terms of a specifically *Messianic* secret. Paradoxically, history is falsified in the interests of historical verisimilitude!"²²

Even if such a view should be thought not to do full justice to the eschatological raw material outlined by Sjöberg as extant in Judaism, it is preferable to psychological explanations of the secrecy motif which suggest that Jesus was anxious not to give a wrong (political) idea of his intentions or did not wish to be taken for a wonder-worker.²³

That a first-century Jew should switch the idea of messiahship from a political to a spiritual pole is theoretically conceivable. But such a divorce of sacred and secular is unusual in inter-testamental Judaism. It is much more likely that since for some reason the habit persisted of calling Jesus "Messiah" even when his death had distinguished him from the *expected* Messiah, this spiritualisation of the messianic idea was produced to help account for the discrepancy.

Such an approach has *something* in common with Wrede's. But here too the question remains why the habit of calling him Messiah began at all.

Scholars following Conzelmann may be looked on as committed to the view that so far as *Mark* is concerned "the Christology is in the tradition, not in the redaction" and that "the secrecy motif, far from being designed to heighten the Christology, actually tones it down".²⁴ Be this as it may, we can see why such toning down would seem necessary. After A.D. 66-73 an explicit use of the term Messiah would not meet with Roman favour; also to risk such unpopularity would seem absurd seeing that *in retrospect* Jesus' career did not look very messianic!

This is almost to have "hoist with their own petard" scholars of the complexion just discussed. For standpoints derived from

²² Letter to the translator dated 27 June 1968.

²³ See R. H. Fuller, *The New Testament in Current Study*, SCM, 1963, pp. 93ff., for a good summary of various views.

²⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 95.

Wrede normally stress that Jesus' career was not indeed messianic to start with. Now we are expanding Schweitzer's question about why there was a tradition of Jesus' messiahship at all, to read: why was there in the pre-Markan pericopes a christological emphasis that (a) *must* not be expunged but (b) could be minimised by suggesting that Jesus enjoined secrecy?

Was this christological emphasis after all Jesus' own? Did the crucifixion bring him up with a jolt? Or did Jesus, as Schweitzer suggested, hazard all on a disaster that could be the prelude to vindication? Or again was Jesus' movement quite simply part of the nationalist-religious movement of his day?

We can now see that those studies of Jesus' connections with contemporary nationalism which extend from the "eccentric" work of Robert Eisler to the more soberly assessed writings of S. G. F. Brandon are directly relevant to the theology of the messianic secret.²⁵ The theologising of the early Church's writers is at least partly the product of their own political and sociological predicament.²⁶

The mere fact that we cannot go behind the New Testament sources to a coherent, chronological biography of Jesus does not exonerate us from showing that he did belong in a particular setting in history, and first-century, Jewish, eschatologically determined history at that.

Only if we are clear about this can we do justice to the element of continuity between him and those early Christians whose christological kerygma included only belatedly, according to some, the motif of secrecy; for in other eyes this very motif was there from the start.

J. C. G. GREIG

²⁵ S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots*, Manchester University Press, 1967, is a useful starting point for study of this trend. Brandon sees Jesus' immediate target as the Sadducean priesthood rather than the Romans, but still has to place him squarely within the political ferment of his day.

²⁶ See also J. C. G. Greig, "The Eschatological Ministry" in *The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, Blackwell, 1965, pp. 99ff.