THE ALLEGED MESSIANIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS[1]

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE distinction between the religion of Jesus himself, and the religion of the disciples who after the crucifixion made him increasingly the object of their own adoration, was clearly stated by Lessing a century and a half ago. Historical Christianity embraces both the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus, both the Jesus of history and the Christ of dogma. While it is relatively easy for modern thinking to contrast sharply these two figures, historically the actual line of separation is exceedingly difficult to fix. Just what elements in the new religion belonged within the realm of Jesus' personal experience, and what features were contributed by his followers who perpetuated the new movement after his death, are often debatable problems.

The question of Jesus' self-classification is perhaps the most crucial issue in this entire field of inquiry. The Jesus of history became the Christ of faith so soon after his death, if indeed the process of elevation had not set in prior to the crucifixion, that one finds it a hazardous undertaking to discriminate accurately between the mind of the Master and the mind of his admiring disciples in the gospel-making age. For them a worthy judgment about him was of far greater conscious importance than any attempt to appreciate his own personal piety. The quality of his religious living was not

[1] Presidential Address given before the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, December 28, 1926.

completely lost from view, and on occasion might be cit as a model for imitation. But oftener it was elevated to height which no Christian might hope to reach, or to which he might even think it improper to aspire. The disciples were not to forget that Jesus had lived religiously, even sinlessly, but they commonly sought credentials for him in formal displays of his authority, or in his self-assertions of dignity, rather than within the sanctuary of his personal experience. What think ye of Christ? was for them the theme of supreme interest.

I

In a religion where he had been made an object of adoration second only to God, a proper appreciation of Jesus was fundamental. It was necessary to provide him with honorific titles indicative of one or another aspect of his official status. In so far as any account whatever was taken of his personal religion, it too was assigned to an unparalleled realm of experience. Presumably he had been aware of possessing an authority and discharging a function which never had and never could come within the range of a disciple's own self-consciousness. As a matter of fact, probably Christians did draw generously upon their own experience for patterns by which to visualize the religious life of their Messiah. But this imagery had to be liberally retouched before it could suitably be applied to the favored Son of God, the apocalyptic Son of Man, or the preexistent incarnate Logos.

The framers of the gospels were all concerned to describe in their respective ways the state of mind that befitted one in Jesus' high station. Throughout, from the earliest to the latest strata in the records, Jesus was invested with a unique authority. Not only were his injunctions said to be superior to those of all previous Jewish teachers, but at his word of command the very power of Satan had now been broken. In the temptation incident this mighty champion of evil had been thwarted by the ready replies of the newly designated Son of God. On the occasion of his first public miracle, an

lean spirit had been terrified into confessing that the new acher was the "Holy one of God" (Mark 1 24). Readers f the gospels were told that when Jesus spoke he filled his hearers with astonishment (Mark 1 22). His audience marveled at the words of grace that fell from his lips (Luke 4 22). Sometimes he unequivocally affirmed that his command transcended the teachings of the most highly revered ancestors of the Jews (Matt. 5 21–43). One evangelist reported that at twelve years of age Jesus had amazed the learned men of Jerusalem by his wisdom (Luke 2 47). On another occasion a Roman officer had testified that no such words as those uttered by Jesus had ever before been spoken by any man (John 7 46).

The mind of Jesus was displayed still more authoritatively when he declared himself qualified to forgive men's sins, a prerogative commonly supposed to belong only to God (Mark 2 5–12). Because confident of his right to the title Son of Man, he assumed not only authority to forgive sins, thus representing God on earth, but he also felt empowered to declare himself superior to that most sacred Jewish institution, the holy sabbath (Mark 2 28). When demons, because they too belonged to the sphere of the supernatural, cried out in terror acknowledging him to be the representative of God, he commanded them not to disclose this secret as yet known only in the higher regions where he and they normally dwelt (Mark 3 11 ff.). Moving upon this high plane of self-interpretation he was represented as believing that God had selected him to fulfil the messianic expectations of the Hebrew race.

If the New Testament evangelists have read the experience of Jesus aright, he carried about within his breast, at least from the hour of baptism, a conviction that he was the individual whom God had chosen to establish the new Kingdom, now preached by himself and earlier by John the Baptist. Only gradually had this truth dawned upon the disciples, but the moment of its apprehension marked a real climax in their career (Mark 8 27–30). Yet if this earthly Jesus was the one appointed to officiate in the role of the

apocalyptic Messiah soon to come in the glory of the Father accompanied by the holy angels (Mark 8 38), he must first find his way to heaven. Would he be snatched up, Enoch-like, when the crucial instant for the Kingdom's inauguration arrived? According to the Synoptic records, all through the period of association with Jesus the disciples remained very much in the dark regarding the way in which this necessary transition was to be effected. But no uncertainty is permitted in the mind of Jesus. It is assumed that he was fully aware of his approaching crucifixion, to be followed immediately by his triumphant resurrection (Mark 8 31-33).

Especially during the closing days of his earthly career had Jesus seemed fortified by the assurance that he was destined to become the apocalyptic Son of Man. He calmly faced arrest and unflinchingly withstood his accusers buoyed up by the conviction that he was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed. He boldly forecast his future vindication on the day when he would be seen sitting in powerful estate at God's right hand whence he would descend victoriously to earth to execute judgment and reward the righteous (Mark 14 62). Already he had taken the disciples into his confidence telling them of impending disaster when the temple would be thrown down, as all nature agonized in travail bringing to birth the new golden age. He had assured them that their own generation would not pass before this forecast of events should be realized. But of the exact day and hour, he confessed that he was himself unaware. The Father alone possessed this knowledge (Mark 13 3-32).

At other times Jesus is reported to have declared his absolute oneness of knowledge with the Father. There is a notable paragraph common to Matthew and Luke in which Jesus is said to have affirmed that he, and he alone among men, had been entrusted with the fulness of divine wisdom (Matt. 11 25-27; Luke 10 21 f.). Others could have a knowledge of the Father only as it might be mediated by the Son. Nowhere else in the Synoptic Gospels is this note of self-assurance on the part of Jesus sounded so clearly, but in the Fourth Gospel it is characteristic of his whole state

of mind. Here he displays continually a divine knowledge carried over from his earlier existence in heaven with the Father. This memory of heavenly wisdom was an ever present possession of his religious consciousness. Consequently the Fourth Gospel is especially rich in declarations of Jesus that disclose his self-interpretation. He informed his hearers that they must be reborn in order to qualify for membership in the Kingdom. But he had needed to experience no such transformation, since from the beginning he was the only-begotten Son of God. By virtue of his original constitution he had always been one with the Father. He and God worked together in perfect unison, and men were to pay their respects to this relationship by honoring the Son even as they honored the Father (John 5 23). The words spoken by Jesus were not the result of any deep meditation and striving within the arena of his personal experience, but were ready-made commandments which had been entrusted to him by God who had sent him forth from heaven that he might become the light of the world and the bread of life (John 12 44-50).

Not only the words of Jesus, but also the unusual acts that he is reported to have performed are an index to the different evangelists' conception of his state of mind. A very unusual measure of self-assurance must be assumed for one who issues orders to the winds and the waves to be calm, or steps out fearlessly upon the surface of the Sea of Galilee. He who could think his word of blessing sufficient to cause a small quantity of bread and fish to become instantly an adequate supply of food for several thousand people, must have enjoyed a correspondingly unusual measure of spiritual self-confidence. Even those performances that seemed to the ancients less spectacular, such as the healing of certain diseases and the driving out of demons from people possessed, were not within the power of one whose religious life was of an entirely ordinary sort.

It is quite true that when the gospels were written the healing of diseases and the exorcising of demons were activities carried on with a measure of success by Christians them-

selves. Confident individuals did on occasion successfully call upon the name of the risen Jesus to effect cures, but the sense of assurance possessed by these healers was not immediate. They cured by the mediating power of Jesus' name. Not so with his mighty works. He moved across the stage with sure and certain step confident that there was resident in his own person virtue to heal all manner of disease. In fact he did not hesitate to enter the chamber of death, or the very tomb itself, to summon spirits back to their former bodily habitations. Everywhere throughout the gospels one is led to believe that confidence in his ability to perform miracles was an integral element in the religious experience of Jesus. Instances are noted where he deliberately refrained from exercising his powers, as when Satan invited him to leap down from a high point of the temple, or when his enemies asked for a sign from heaven, but there is no intimation that the evangelists entertained any tremors of doubt regarding his ability to produce the miracle demanded.

The gospel picture of the religion lived by Jesus betrays numerous evidences of heroic coloring on the part of his later followers. They were intent upon raising the respect of their contemporaries to the greatest possible pitch of admiration for the founder of the new religion. It was not their purpose to depict his own spiritual history, except as the story might serve to make him seem a more worthy object of devotion. Incidents in his career and words from his lips were selected and interpreted with a view to stimulating confidence in one or another phase of his official significance. The mind of the reverent disciple was made the mind of the Master. Everywhere it was assumed that he had deliberately shaped his career in accordance with the apologetic interest in his official character that was now so essential a phase of the Christian enterprise. Reported acts and sayings might incidentally shed much light on the hero's own religious living, but the narrators rarely failed to provide a setting that would stress his claims to reverence on the part of disciples. From first to last the gospels are pervaded by christological interests. Only secondarily, if at

all, do they aim to exhibit the personal piety of the Nazarene.

II

The process of christological evolution, already evident in the gospels, continued in the early church. Its drift was constantly away from any interest in the religion of Jesus to definition of his soteriological significance and classification of his personality. In the so-called Apostles' Creed, thought leaped directly from "born of the Virgin Mary" to "suffered under Pontius Pilate." As time passed attention fixed itself more and more firmly on Christ as Lord and Savior, while the features of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth gradually faded out of the picture. To deny the reality of his human career was, indeed, a serious offense; but to interest one's self chiefly in the human side of his being likewise involved sure condemnation for heresy.

For upwards of a century scholars have been endeavoring to burrow behind the christological interests that ultimately became solidly entrenched in the dogma of Christendom. In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, when Lessing broached the subject, the possibility of distinguishing between the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus must have seemed to most theologians an entirely impractical demand. It has required long years of labor in the formulation of historical method and the criticism of documents to establish the legitimacy of a quest for knowledge of the earthly Jesus in distinction from the Christ of faith. Still there remain wide differences of opinion on the subject even among those who have long and arduously devoted themselves to its study. The place held by christological speculation in Jesus' own mind is at the present moment one of the major critical problems connected with the history of his career.

While a century of labor has not solved all difficulties, much has been accomplished in the way of clarifying and limiting the problem. One no longer needs to raise the question, which was still lively even fifty years ago, as to whether Jesus regarded himself a cosmic redeemer, after the

model of the soteriological dogma of traditional Catholic and Protestant faith. The genesis of that form of thought is now too well known to permit the assumption that it could have served the purposes of Jesus and his associates. Whatever may have been his self-interpretation with reference to soteriology, we concede today that its type must have been Judeo-Palestinian and not Greco-European.

Already early in the nineteenth century the interests of ethical idealism had been brought to bear upon the question of Jesus' self-interpretation. In substance it was assumed that he believed himself to be the Messiah promised to the Hebrew people because he felt that morally and spiritually he was in perfect accord with the will of God. Because of the prominence given to ethics in the Jewish religion, this hypothesis on first sight seemed less incongruous with historical possibility than did the older traditionalism. One did not stop to question whether in the Jewish setting where Jesus had done his work, any degree of conscious moral acumen would ever have been imagined to constitute a messianic credential. In reality this mode of thought gave satisfaction because it made Jesus more highly estimable in the nineteenth century, not because it made him a more understandable figure within the Palestinian society of his own day.

A distinct advance was made when the problem was placed on a more strictly documentary basis through critical examination of the gospels. This achievement of research had become generally effective by the close of the last century. It was possible now to read the mind of Jesus as depicted, say, in the Logia, in Mark, or in John. Since the ethical note was most pronounced in the first of these distinguishable sources, the result in some quarters was a further emphasis upon moral idealism as a key to the understanding of Jesus' self-estimate. In his teaching about the love of God and the brotherhood of men, to be realized through a life of spiritual fellowship with the Father, Jesus was thought to have proved himself the real savior of mankind. Accordingly it was assumed that he had appropriated to himself the title of Messiah. This had meant for Jesus largely a new definition of the concept, but

the procedure was thought entirely permissible and in no slight degree a worthy evidence of his originality. The idea was liked by moderns, and one did not question too closely its appropriateness to the first century.

A better acquaintance with the apocalyptic literature of later Judaism, combined with a larger use of Mark as the key to Jesus' thinking, produced the eschatological interpretation so widely in vogue for the last twenty-five years. Not infrequently it was taken to be the final word on the subject of Jesus' self-estimate. With comparative ease one was able to show the correspondence in imagery between the Jewish apocalypses and much of Jesus' teaching concerning the end of the world and the coming of the new age. The Synoptic Gospels in particular exhibited a striking picture of the Son of Man coming with the clouds to institute judgment and inaugurate the Kingdom. Also these gospels represented plainly that Jesus had identified himself with the figure of the Son of Man suggested in Daniel and distinctly mentioned in the Similitudes of Enoch. Jesus, therefore, had classed himself in the apocalyptic messianic category. Prominent New Testament scholars on both sides of the Atlantic subscribed to this opinion. There remained, it is true, a few notable skeptics, but their audiences were small. The voice of a more vociferous Schweitzer easily drowned out the utterances of a more modest Wrede.

Today the audience of the skeptics seems to be on the increase. Doubts regarding eschatology as an adequate imagery for the self-interpretation of Jesus have recently emerged in different quarters. But, unquestionably, even the earliest strata of gospel tradition clearly imply apocalyptic self-classification for Jesus. Yet in the last analysis this representation may be only a residuum of early christological speculation on the part of the disciples. The utmost that one could say is that beyond doubt, in the circles of Christendom where this segment of the gospel story was formulated, it was firmly believed that Jesus had been raised to heaven and inducted into the office of the coming apocalyptic Son of Man. For Christians in the middle of the first century to entertain this

conviction necessarily meant ascribing the same opinion to Jesus himself. Here again the mind of the Master may have become known first by reading the mind of the disciples.

Perhaps one is prone to ask, How could the disciples come to believe that Jesus was to be identified with the apocalyptic Messiah if he himself had not so taught? Unless the suggestion had been received from him, one might think it impossible to imagine that his followers could have attained this remarkable conviction regarding their former friend and teacher. But there is another question equally in point. What antecedents made this type of thought possible for Jesus himself? Had the motives which could have prompted him to adorn himself with apocalyptic robes been as powerful as were the incentives that would later lead the disciples to drape these garments about their martyred teacher? Perhaps we yield ourselves too readily to the tacit assumption that Jesus must have officialized himself in terms of some soteriological category. Any procedure which takes for granted the presence of a personal christological interest in Jesus' own mind is in reality a begging of the question at issue. That he preached apocalypticism was one of the most certain rediscoveries of New Testament scholarship in the closing decades of the last century. But it is over-hasty to affirm immediately that he had given himself an eschatological messianic label. This was by no means an inevitable step for a herald of the new age.

III

The attention of Jesus had first been arrested by the activities of John the Baptist. One day the carpenter from Nazareth joined a band of pilgrims on their way to the Jordan valley to hear the new prophet who was calling the people to repentance in preparation for the impending day of judgment. This, so far as we are aware, was the initial move toward the choice of a new life-work for Jesus himself. His very presence among those baptized by John is ample proof that he was heartily in sympathy with the Baptist's message and shared his concern for the welfare of the Jews. Their distresses called for alleviation. Their political institutions had failed to

bring desired relief, while sporadic outbursts of revolutionary zeal had merely aggravated their misfortunes. But the group of sympathetic hearers that had gathered about the new wilderness preacher of repentance looked more directly to God for deliverance. By an early display of supernatural power he would suddenly bring to realization the final age of blessedness. At last the great and terrible day of Yahweh was at hand.

Among Palestinian Jews in the time of Jesus an advocate of eschatology was no monstrosity. For upwards of two centuries this type of thinking had been gaining popularity, as it had been called upon to serve at critical moments to inspire confidence in the power and protection of God. Just how extensively apocalypticism was in vogue, and whether its adherents could ever have been properly called a "school," may remain a matter of doubt. In the very nature of the case, eschatological thinking was more fluid in character than were, for example, the tenets of scribism, and people who looked for deliverance through a catastrophic establishment of the Kingdom could hardly have constituted so well-defined a social group as were Pharisees or Sadducees. Yet, unquestionably, the eschatological hope was an attitude of mind thoroughly at home in Jesus' environment. It was not only entirely respectable, but apparently in some circles it was very highly esteemed.

That Jesus believed the day of Yahweh to be at hand, is one of the most certain conclusions to be deduced from the fact of his early association with John. But Jesus was not content simply to insure safety for himself; he would also save his neighbors. This impulse transformed him from an appreciative disciple of the Baptist into an aggressive preacher on his own account. Presently he was to become even more effective than John had been in broadcasting the message of preparation for the inauguration of the Kingdom. This attempt to effect in his hearers religious renewal through repentance and reconsecration to God was an interest that from time to time had been championed by a noble succession of preachers in Israel. In giving himself to this

endeavor Jesus proved to be morally and spiritually a lineal descendant of the Hebrew prophets. Had he been called upon for self-classification, in the interests of defining the distinctive type of task upon which he was now engaged, undoubtedly the word prophet would immediately have sprung to his lips.

The memory of the prophets and their work constituted one of the most picturesque and stimulating religious heritages that antiquity had bequeathed to later Judaism. The story of their lives had been familiar to Jesus from early youth and it is not surprising that he should in a measure have duplicated their experiences and interpreted his own emotional life in similar fashion. Those were days when feeling ran high and when religion often expressed itself most effectively in forms of activity that might seem in later times to border dangerously on fanaticism. Jesus would have been quite out of place in the life of his day had he chosen his new task with utter calmness and deliberation. When he forsook his handicraft to become a preacher of repentance to his kinsmen he made a change in his career as radical as that made by an Amos, a Jeremiah, or any other of the ancient prophets. For him, as for them, the new obligation was God-given and the individual felt conscious of unusual divine equipment for his mission. Like the prophets he justified his new course of action by reference to stirring initial experiences, the memory of which has been perpetuated by his followers in the gospel stories of his baptism and temptation.

The gospel writers, however, and the Christians of their day, were far more interested to find meaning for themselves in the story of Jesus' baptism than they were to discover its meaning for him. In their environment the incident seemed especially valuable as a means of classifying officially the founder of the new religion and authenticating its rite of initiation. But neither of these interests had been a part of the situation in which Jesus lived. The voice that could transform an unschooled carpenter into an ardent prophetic preacher must have spoken in accents of far deeper reality. Officialdom and ritualism, as areas for self-interpretation, had

made no appeal to Amos and his successors. Even prophets as a class were prophets at their worst, in the eyes of those Hebrew reformers who appeared from time to time summoning their kinsmen to higher living. The true spokesmen of God were those who had heard his voice in their own souls revealing to them the message that was to be passed on to their audiences. These men were confident that they had been chosen for their tasks by the decree and favor of heaven, but they neither demanded nor expected self-exaltation, and hardly claimed even that measure of honor that would seem to have been their just due. Inspiration—not installation—was the essence of the prophetic experience.

In the Judaism of Jesus' day endowment by the Spirit was characteristic terminology for describing the way in which God made choice of individuals and prepared them for special tasks. That Jesus would feel himself empowered by the Spirit for the new work to which God had called him would be but to repeat in his experience the favor which heaven had shown in the past to a Moses, a David and a long line of prophets. One possessed by the Spirit was lifted quite above the plane of ordinary living, at least on all critical occasions. The driving force for life's work now came from without and from above. Impulses and emotions were sanctified, convictions were made doubly strong, and the whole area of moral and spiritual ideals was transported into the regions of the absolute by the certainty that the individual no longer pursued simply the dictates of his own will but was directed in his activities by the very Spirit of God.

Confident though Spirit-filled men were that God himself had chosen and equipped them for their tasks, they were not unaware of the difficulties that lay in the way of realizing their ideals. The Scriptures told of prophets who would, if possible, have resisted the divine impulsion. They shrank from the responsibilities laid upon them and felt personally quite unequal to their new calling. They expected opposition from their audiences, an opposition that might at any moment cost them their lives. Rarely were they rewarded with the

crown of martyrdom, but frequently it was their fate to find themselves without a following, while their message was unappreciated and their hopes were thwarted. A new teacher well acquainted with the story of the prophet's career among the Hebrews would hardly choose on his own initiative to enter a profession that offered so little prospect of success. But the great prophets had never taken up their duties because they thought the calling promised them a brilliant career. They, like their Christian successor Paul, preached because they must. Necessity was upon them, and to resist would have been worse than death.

Yet had prophets no right to expect, or even to demand, success? Having been called to their work by God and endowed by the Spirit, these new messengers of righteousness occupied a position of favor with heaven that surely deserved to be recognized and honored. It was not inconsistent with their sense of authority to ask of God on their behalf continued displays of approval and protection. But to have indulged themselves in this respect would have menaced the prophets' characteristic moral integrity and their ideal of absolute devotion to the will of God. History had shown that they must be prepared to meet rejection and defeat, even persecution and death, without losing confidence in the sanctity of their mission. Nevertheless, it might well seem incongruous that chosen spokesmen of heaven could not ask special privileges for themselves in the prosecution of their God-assigned duties. It was in some such area of conflicting emotions, when, in the presence of a mighty task, the sense of a divine summons momentarily stood in sharp conflict with the feeling of personal limitations, that the so-called temptation of Jesus had its original setting.

Jesus could not lightly abandon his customary occupation and ignore the problem of securing food and other necessities of life that would still be required in his new work. He knew the strength of the current desire among the people for unusual displays of God's favor. The revolutionary psychology of the day invited the activity of leaders who would demonstrate miraculously their divine equipment to instigate

a successful revolt against the Roman government. But for Jesus the path of duty lay in a different direction. He would make no claim upon God for ravens to bring him his bread, he would ask no assistance from ministering angels, and he would leave it for God himself to abolish the rule of Rome. The duties that had been imposed upon him called for a different program of action. His response to John's preaching had culminated in a keen sense of new consecration to righteous living before God and among men. This attainment in his own life had been accompanied by an experience of irresistible divine impulsion to lead others in a similar quest. The times were evil and the day of reckoning forecast by a host of previous prophets was at hand. The supreme need of the hour was to summon the Jewish people to more complete conformity with the will of their God. Without reserve Jesus now gave himself to the pursuit of this new-found prophetic task.

IV

From the moment of entrance upon his public career Jesus had possessed an overmastering conviction that his life had been linked with Deity in new bonds of experience and obligation. God bad made special choice of him and had uniquely equipped him to deliver a message to the children of Israel. But to what extent this religious conviction impelled Jesus to attempt self-classification is another matter. Subsequently the disciples, viewing the earlier events in the light of their later experiences, believed that he had attained to a sense of divine sonship that meant identification of himself with the one whom God had promised to raise up in Israel to accomplish the deliverance of his people. In other words, Jesus accepted the appellation "Son" as an equivalent for the official title of Messiah.

The epithet would have served very well to express for Jesus his feeling of new status as the chosen spokesman of God. But it is far less probable that such terminology, if actually used, would have had messianic connotation either for him or for his immediate associates. All Israelites were

familiarly known as sons of God, while an especially devout or favored individual, like a wise man or a king, was specifically a "son." There was no incongruity in the Talmudic tradition that the heavenly voice had designated a first-century rabbi, famed for his piety and wisdom, "my son Hanina." Not until the end of the first century A. D., and then only in one of the apocalyptic books, does the expression "Son" appear as the synonym for Messiah, a usage exactly parallel to that of the gospels. Among the contemporaries of Jesus, any individual upon whom God's favor was felt to rest in an especial manner, had ample precedent for entertaining the conviction that he in particular was a "son." The epithet implied unusual equipment for duty or special commission for service. But it could hardly have occurred to any one, much less could it have been a generally recognized interpretation, that the designation was an official messianic label. That identification was an achievement of later Christian messianism and of the still later rival Jewish apocalypticism of IV Ezra.

For Son of Man the case is somewhat different. Since Jesus, like John the Baptist, summoned his hearers to repentance in preparation for the eschatological Kingdom, his followers easily convinced themselves that he had not only predicted the coming of the Son of Man visioned in the apocalypses of Daniel and Enoch, but that he had identified himself with this dramatic figure. If Jesus had employed this self-designation with anything like the frequency implied in the gospels, and in the contexts there indicated, it would seem to have meant for him a deliberate affirmation of his messiahship.

All four New Testament gospels permit him, with almost astounding persistence, to call himself Son of Man. Also, they restrict the term to Jesus' own vocabulary. But they allow him to employ it in such varied contexts that they bear no clear and united testimony to his exact meaning. The gospel of John comes nearest to attaining consistency, but quite severs the phrase from its older apocalyptic connections. The Synoptic usage varies between settings that stress apocalyptic associations of power or dignity, and those in which suffering and humility

seem to be characteristics of one who would qualify as Son of Man. But on the whole the eschatological emphasis predominates throughout the first three gospels.

In the Christian communities represented by the gospel tradition there was a pronounced fondness for Son of Man upon the lips of Jesus. Like "Verily I say unto you," and other turns of speech with a liturgical or sacrosanct flavor, the expression was never uttered by anyone else, not even by the demons, whose superior knowledge had led to their immediate recognition that Jesus was Son of God. Of itself "Son of Man" had no natural meaning, nor do the contexts in which it occurs always make clear its significance. This very air of mystery was not unwelcome to the ancients, although it might easily betray a later interpreter of the gospels into assuming that their authors were mechanically reproducing from earlier tradition an inherited locution so ancient that even to them it had become an enigma. On the contrary, a comparative examination of the records readily reveals the fact that the several evangelists were not controlled simply by "sources," but used the term Son of Man because fond of it on their own account. They thus entitled Jesus because they delighted to do so, whether they found the phrase in their sources or employed it in sentences of their own composition. Here again the mind of the disciple and the mind of the Master were readily made to coincide.

It was far easier for Christians in the latter half of the first century to designate Jesus "Son of Man" than it would have been for him in his own lifetime so to style himself. In the Aramaic speech of his native land, and with the scriptural background of Ezekiel, the Psalms and Daniel, if not also the Similitudes of Enoch, at his disposal, Jesus might readily have employed this collocation of words. The Semitic tongue, whether Hebrew or Aramaic, framed the expression "son of man" as easily as English says "mankind" (literally "man's child") or German "Menschenkind"—and with the same generic meaning. But, of course, no one in his right mind goes about calling himself "the Mankind," "the Human Race." The assumption that Jesus had put himself forward as the idealized

epitome of humanity was a happy discovery of later theologians, but it is without historical justification.

If the new teacher from Nazareth used the expression Son of Man, either it was in an impersonal sense meaning mankind in general, or else he appropriated it as a technical term that had been coined on the basis of its occurrence in Daniel to describe the new Israel, a figure "like unto a son of man," and its more specific titular usage in Enoch to designate that individual at present resident in heaven in the form of a man, a "Son of Man," whom God had selected as his representative to establish the new future order. Both John the Baptist and Jesus, if familiar with the relevant passages in the Similitudes of Enoch, might easily have spoken of the coming of the Son of Man in connection with the day of judgment and the end of the present age. Nevertheless this terminology seems not to have been widely current. At least it has not left its mark extensively upon even the apocalyptic literature of Judaism. If used in this setting it would have been a perfectly intelligible expression, but apparently the majority of Jewish eschatologists in the time of Jesus looked directly to God, rather than to any intermediary heavenly being, for the establishment of the Kingdom.

Were one to grant that Jesus might have been sufficiently familiar with the imagery of Daniel and Enoch to know the technical usage of the term Son of Man, the application of the title to himself would still be problematic. This God-chosen official was not to appear on earth until the arrival of that eschatological moment of destruction and restoration synonymous with the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the meantime the Son of Man resided in the regions above with God and the angels. Ancient seers had seen him there enthroned in state ready for his triumphant descent to earth. In this imagery where would Jesus find any likeness to himself? He had been a Galilean artisan before he became God's chosen herald of repentance, while the apocalyptic Son of Man had been dwelling in heaven awaiting the arrival of that moment when he would assume his messianic duties by revealing himself on earth fully arrayed with the power and

glory of God. If Jesus assumed that he would not become Son of Man until after his death, what justification would he have had for supposing that the present heavenly occupant of the exalted messianic office would be dispossessed in order that the Nazarene reformer might assume the duties of that high functionary? Under such circumstances it is altogether improbable that Jesus had ever called himself the Son of Man.

One might doubt very seriously whether Jesus ever used the title Son of Man even in the third person. Had he persistently connected the coming of the Kingdom with the appearing of this apocalyptic figure, as pictured in the books of Daniel and Enoch, the disciples in later times might have found it much more difficult than they did to substitute their crucified teacher for this already enthroned messianic official. More probably that particular area of their eschatological thinking was still nebulous at the time of Jesus' death, and hence could be the more easily elaborated and revised in conformity with their later experiences. Jesus' own hope, like that of his contemporaries, had fixed itself on God, who would himself both judge and redeem the people of his choice. The traditional messianic figure of Judaism, who was essentially an anointed Davidic prince, occupied no conspicuous place on the horizon of eschatology. Those Jews of Jesus' day who leaned hard toward apocalypticism were more interested in God and the Kingdom than they were in creating a new transcendental messianic figure. It remained for Christianity to restore Jewish messianism to a new popularity around the person of the risen and glorified Jesus. This development was intimately bound up with the religious history of the disciples in the years following the crucifixion; it had not been a vital factor in the personal religion of Jesus. His energies had been consecrated to the task of preparing his hearers for membership in the Kingdom; he had not been concerned with messianic self-interpretation.[2]

[2] The view here set forth is presented in greater detail in the author's *Jesus: A New Biography* (Chicago, 1927).