

THE MESSIANIC SECRET IN MARK*

By J. D. G. DUNN

Despite the cool reception given to it by English scholarship when it first appeared, it is now abundantly evident that Wilhelm Wrede's *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (1901) marked a turning point of considerable importance in the study of the Gospels inasmuch as Wrede was really the first to recognize and appreciate the theological nature of the Synoptics. His specific thesis (that the Messianic secret motif in Mark has a theological rather than a historical origin) has 'mark'edly influenced the researches of those who came after him, to such an extent that it is often taken for granted, a 'given' in the investigation of new propositions and theses.¹ His own statement of the thesis has not escaped criticism and refinement, of course, but his main conclusion still stands as proven for the majority of continental scholars. An investigation of the Messianic secret motif in Mark must therefore deal in the first place with Wrede himself, and I will begin by briefly outlining Wrede's argument.

He points first to the commands with which Jesus silences the Messianic confessions of the demons (1:23-25, 34; 3:11f.; cf. 5:6f.; 9:20). Since the various explanations offered for the possessed individual's knowledge are unsatisfactory, we must recognize a legendary development in the tradition. When other commands to silence are also taken into consideration—to those healed miraculously (1:43-45; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), the disciples after Peter's confession (8:30) and after the trans-

* Revised form of a paper given at the New Testament Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship, at Tyndale House, Cambridge, July, 1969.

¹ For the influence of Wrede's work see, e.g., P. W. Meyer, 'The Problem of the Messianic Selfconsciousness of Jesus', *NovT* 4 (1960) 122-138, and N. Perrin, 'The Wredestrasse Becomes the Hauptstrasse', *Journal of Religion* 46 (1966) 296-300. The continuing interest in Wrede's own thesis is illustrated by the re-issue of a third edition of *Das Messiasgeheimnis* in 1963, with an English translation due shortly, and by the recent contributions of G. Minette de Tillesse, *Le secret messianique dans l'Évangile de Marc*, du Cerf, Paris (1968), which unfortunately I have so far been unable to consult; B. G. Powley, 'The Purpose of the Messianic Secret: A Brief Survey', *ExpT* 80 (1968-69) 308-310; D. Aune, 'The Problem of the Messianic Secret', *NovT* 11 (1969) 1-31; and R. N. Longenecker, 'The Messianic Secret in the Light of Recent Discoveries', *EQ* 41 (1969) 207-215.

figuration (9:9)—as also the intention of Jesus to remain hidden (7:24; 9:30f.) and the command addressed by the crowd to Bartimaeus to be silent (10:47f.), it becomes evident that what is being thus guarded is the Messianic secret. He goes on to cite other evidence, the most notable of which are the private instruction which He gives to the disciples (4:34; 7:17–23; 9:28f.; 8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34; 13:3ff.) and the saying about parabolic teaching (4:10–13). On the basis of this evidence Wrede delivers his judgment—namely that for Mark there is no historical motif in question; rather the idea of the Messianic secret is a wholly theological conception. The key is Mark 9:9, when Peter, James and John are commanded not to speak of what they had seen until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. Jesus' Messiahship is and must be a secret. Only the inner circle can be let into the secret. But with the resurrection comes the revelation to all. In short, the whole is a theological construction. Jesus did not in fact claim to be Messiah during His ministry, and it was not until after the resurrection that His Messianic status was affirmed by the Christian community. The Messianic secret is nothing other than the attempt made by Mark to account for the absence of Messianic claims by Jesus Himself.

I

An analysis of Wrede's thesis reveals three principal strands: first the isolation of a distinct motif in Mark which can be called the 'Messianic secret'; second the argument that certain elements of that motif, noticeably the exorcisms, are non-historical, leading to the conclusion that the whole motif is the construction of Christian or Markan theology (the more recent rise of form criticism has, of course, given more depth and consistency to this argument); third, as the *raison d'être*, the complementary argument that belief in Jesus as Messiah was an Easter faith and that the Messianic secret results from an attempt to read back Messiahship into the life of Jesus.

(1) If this is a fair representation of Wrede's argument it seems to me to be open to several major criticisms. The first of these is that Wrede has narrowed the scope of the secrecy motif too much. I strongly question whether the silences

commanded by Jesus in connection with the healing miracles can adequately be brought under the category of *Messianic* secret. What is there about the healings that cannot be understood before the cross and resurrection which is not *publicly* demonstrated in, for example, the healing of the paralytic before the scribes in chapter 2, or the healing of the man with the withered arm in the synagogue in chapter 3? What is there about the healing miracles which particularly marks out Jesus as Messiah? According to Mark not one of the miracles performed publicly led the spectators to conclude that Jesus was the Messiah (though see below, pp. 101ff.), while several passages indicate that their reaction was often completely different. The people of Nazareth saw only the carpenter, the member of a well-known local family, despite the public knowledge of His miracles (6:1-6). Herod and others thought He might be John the Baptist resurrected, or Elijah or another prophet (6:14f.; 8:28). The Pharisees judged Him to be possessed by Beelzebul (3:22).² Moreover, the only recipient of Jesus' healing who hails Him in Messianic terms (10:46ff.) is *not* silenced by Jesus. So just what secret was being safeguarded by those commands to silence?

I am not altogether surprised therefore to note that Ulrich Luz distinguishes the *Wundergeheimnis* from the *Messiasgeheimnis*, though I would hesitate to follow him in linking the former to a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* Christology as distinct from the latter's Messiah-Christology.³ What I am more certain of is that the attempt to bring all the healing miracle commands to silence under the heading of 'Messianic secret' fails to carry conviction. Despite Wrede's belief that only one explanation must be applied to the so-called secrecy passages, it is highly probable that in different situations there were a variety of motives operative—and particularly in Jesus' dealings with the sick: e.g. desire for privacy and concern for the well-being of the individual being cured (cf. 1:44; 5:40; 7:33; 8:22, 26; 9:25), as well as the wish to discourage misleading ideas about Him-

² G. H. Boobyer, 'The Secrecy Motif in St. Mark's Gospel', *NTS* 6 (1959-60) 232.

³ U. Luz, 'Das Geheimnismotiv und die markinische Christologie', *ZNW* 56 (1965) 9-30. L. E. Keck further subdivides the Markan miracle material into a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* cycle and a distinct 'strong man' cycle ('Mark 3:7-12 and Mark's Christology', *JBL* 84 (1965) 341ff.); but see T. A. Burkill, 'Mark 3:7-12 and the Alleged Dualism in the Evangelist's Miracle Material', *JBL* 87 (1968) 409ff.

self from gaining fresh currency, and perhaps the strong sense that His destiny was completely in the hands of God.⁴ In this connection it is worth noting that there are grounds for recognizing 1:21–45 as a pre-Markan block of material in whose construction one of the determining motifs was the way in which excessive publicity resulted in increasing restriction on Jesus' movement and ministry (Capernaum, country towns, desert areas—1:21, 38, 45).

I question also whether the saying about the use of parables can be counted as part of the evidence for the Messianic secret. In Mark 4:11 what Jesus says is that parables conceal the mystery of the *Kingdom* from *οἱ ἔξω*—and while I would agree that the mystery of the Kingdom is closely related to the historical status and ministry of Jesus, it is not to be wholly identified with the Messiahship of the earthly Jesus.⁵ Besides, both 4:11 (to those who are outside *everything* comes in parables) and 4:34 (He would not speak to them except in parables) indicates that it was His *whole* ministry of word and deed which had this parabolic effect—and His whole ministry cannot be contained within the bounds of the Messianic secret. In 7:17, for example, the parable whose explanation He gives to the disciples in private is His teaching about inward cleanliness. One should also note that if 4:11 (the illumination of the disciples) is interpreted in terms of the Messianic secret it at once comes into conflict with passages like 9:32 (the incomprehension of the disciples).⁶

Turning to this latter theme, the obtuseness of the disciples, which is often cited as an important element in Mark's theology of the Messianic secret, even this cannot be contained within its scope. I would be prepared to admit the instance of the disciples' astonishment and hardness of heart at the stilling of the storm as part of the Messianic secret (6:51–52). For I

⁴ Cf., e.g., R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark*, Clarendon Press, Oxford (1950) 37, 46; J. W. Leitch, 'The Injunctions of Silence in Mark's Gospel', *ExpT* 66 (1954–55) 178f.; T. W. Manson, 'Realized Eschatology and the Messianic Secret', *Studies in the Gospels*, Blackwell, Oxford (ed. D. E. Nineham 1955) 212f.; T. A. Burkill, 'Concerning St. Mark's Conception of Secrecy', *HJ* 55 (1956–57) 153 n. 2; Aune, 24f.

⁵ Cf. Aune, 25.

⁶ T. A. Burkill's rather cavalier treatment of the point—'It is probable that the evangelist was unaware of this problem'—is no answer in view of the considerable skill which has otherwise gone into the construction of the Messianic secret motif ('The Cryptology of Parables in St. Mark's Gospel', *NovT* 1 (1956) 252).

certainly see Messianic significance in the feeding of the 5,000, although I am not so sure that Mark wished to bring out that significance, and Mark does specifically say that the disciples were dumbfounded 'because they had not seen what the miracle of the loaves meant' (Jerusalem Bible—οὐ γὰρ συνῆκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις). For the same reason I can see the justification for including the disciples' misunderstanding over the saying about the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod with the Messianic secret, although the passage is a difficult one. For once again their obtuseness is underlined by a reference to the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000, and the pericope ends with the words of Jesus οὕτω συνίετε; but it is impossible to bring 10:10 under the Messianic secret—for what the disciples inquire of Him in private (εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν) is the meaning of His saying about divorce and marriage—hardly a distinctively Messianic theme.⁷

Bearing in mind this diversity in the situations which demonstrate the disciples' obtuseness, it is more plausible to recognize in the motif a historical reminiscence of the very natural and unexceptional slowness of unlettered men whose rigid and closed system of thought made it difficult for them to adjust to new teaching. It was not simply the difficulty of coping with new information, but the impossibility of trying to assimilate that new information into a system of thought and reference which had no place for such information. The situation which would cause a computer either to admit defeat or to explode, caused only confusion and incomprehension on the part of the disciples. Such a situation can be resolved only by a conversion of mind—a transformation of *Weltanschauung*—something which by all accounts did not happen to the disciples till the gift of the Spirit after Jesus' resurrection. To go to the other extreme and attribute the motif to a Markan polemic against the disciples is certainly uncalled for.⁸

⁷ See also 9:34 and 10:37. P. Vielhauer also points out that the infrequency of Mark's use of *χριστός* shows that it is not the most important title of Jesus for Mark and calls in question the use of the expression 'Messianic secret' ('Erwägungen zur Christologie des Markus-evangeliums', *Zeit und Geschichte*, Dankesgabe an R. Bultmann, ed. E. Dinkler, J. C. B. Mohr, Tübingen (1964) 157).

⁸ *Contra* J. B. Tyson, 'The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark', *JBL* 80 (1961) 261-268; J. Schreiber, 'Die Christologie des Markusevangeliums', *ZTK* 58 (1961) 154-183; T. J. Weeden, 'The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel', *ZNW* 59 (1968) 145-158.

I rather suspect that Wrede was misled by taking the exorcisms as his starting point. It was natural that a nineteenth/ twentieth century man should fasten on to these incidents which were to him among the most bizarre and incredible, and which for that very reason gave him immediate access to the theological viewpoint of the primitive Church—that is, to the way the primitive Church had viewed and worked over the historical facts. No psychological argument could explain how, for example, the Gerasene demoniac came to hail Jesus as Son of the Most High God, and recourse to a supernatural explanation was unacceptable. Therefore, Wrede concluded, we are in the presence of a legendary development in the tradition which leads us straight into the heart of the Messianic secret. Leaving aside the issue of demon possession and the possibility of supernatural knowledge, which I personally hold to be a far more open question than Wrede allowed, it still seems to me that Wrede's approach was methodologically suspect. For the exorcism narratives would not stand out so prominently in Mark's time. The fact is that in their manner of presentation they accord by and large with the standard pattern of exorcism stories, even to the extent of the demon using the name of the exorcist and the exorcist commanding the demon to silence,⁹ and the knowledgeable reader of Mark's Gospel would see nothing out of the ordinary in Jesus' response to the demon's cry in Mark 1:25—*φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ*. I recognize that there is weight to the counter argument that *Mark* understood the injunction to silence in this first exorcism in terms of 1:34 and 3:11f., which could well be taken to indicate that demoniacs regularly hailed Him as Son of God and that Jesus' usual response was a strong warning that they should not make Him known.¹⁰ But if Mark was trying to 'get over' to his readers the message of the Messianic secret the first exorcism would give no indication of it to his readers. In fact, the distinctive Messianic secret motif only appears in these two summary statements, and there are no commands to silence in any of the other exorcisms where the narrative goes into any detail (5:1–20; 7:24–30; 9:14–29). I question

⁹ T. A. Burkill, 'The Injunctions to Silence in St. Mark's Gospel', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 12 (1956) 593f.; also *Mysterious Revelation—An Examination of the Philosophy of St. Mark's Gospel*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y. (1963) 72–78.

¹⁰ Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*, 63–66, 71.

therefore whether Wrede was right to single out the exorcisms as the decisive clue to the meaning of the secrecy theme in Mark. I might also mention here by way of support Eduard Schweizer's argument against J. M. Robinson¹¹ that the special theological contribution of Mark lies in his emphasis on the teaching of Jesus, not on the exorcisms which came to him in the tradition. The function of the latter is much more to illuminate and characterize the teaching of Jesus as an act of divine authority. Thus we note 1:27: the people's response to the exorcism is to say, 'Here is a teaching that is new and with authority behind it . . .'.¹²

This then is my first criticism of Wrede's thesis: that it fails to do sufficient justice to the full scope of the secrecy motif in Mark. The secrecy motif is more complicated than Wrede allowed. And since those passages which give his thesis credibility are only part of a larger whole, it suggests that there is more to Mark's picture of Jesus at this point than the hypothesis of the *Messianic* secret allows—a 'more' which puts a question mark against that hypothesis.

(2) If the first criticism puts a question mark against Wrede's isolation of a specifically *Messianic* secret, my second puts a question mark against his calling the motif '*Messianic secret*'. For it appears to me that Wrede did not give sufficient weight to what might be called a counter-balancing publicity-revelation theme. Of course, it is part of the *Messianic* secret, especially as revised by Wrede's successors, that it holds in a certain tension the paradox of hiddenness and openness, of secrecy and revelation.¹³ But my point is this: not only is the publicity theme quite as prominent as the theme of secrecy, but also, and more important, it seems frequently to run directly counter to the secrecy motif. After the first exorcism Mark says 'his reputation spread everywhere (*πανταχοῦ*) through all (*δᾶπν*) the surrounding Galilean countryside' (1:28). After the healing of the leper we are told that the leper started talking about it freely and telling the story everywhere,

¹¹ *The Problem of History in Mark*, SCM, London (1957) 33–42.

¹² E. Schweizer, 'Anmerkungen zur Theologie des Markus', *Neotestamentica*, Zwingli Verlag, Zurich (1963) 96f. The imperfect tenses of 1:21 and the general statement of 1:27 (spirits—plural) indicate that the incident has typical significance.

¹³ See e.g. G. Strecker, 'Zur Messiasgeheimnistheorie in Markusevangelium', *Studia Evangelica* 3 (1964) 93f.

so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town but had to stay outside in places where nobody lived. Even so, people from all around came to Him (1:45). On another occasion Mark says 'once again such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal' (3:20). And far from commanding him to be silent Jesus orders the Gerasene demoniac, now cured, to 'go home to your people and tell them all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you'. So the man went off and proceeded to spread throughout the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for Him (5:19f.).¹⁴ In Nazareth they certainly knew all about His miracles, were 'scandalized' at Him (6:2-3), and so remarkable and public were they that all sorts of rumours were current about Him—Elijah, a prophet, John the Baptist risen from the dead (6:14ff.; 8:28). The feeding of the 5,000 was the result of an attempted escape to seclusion on the part of Jesus and His disciples, because 'there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time to eat' (6:31). And in the region of Tyre and Sidon He entered a house (*εἰς οἶκον*) and did not want anyone to know it; but it was impossible for Him to be concealed (7:24). To cite but one other instance, it is certainly remarkable, if we believe that the Messianic secret motif decisively shaped the material, that Bartimaeus should be allowed to be depicted as twice loudly hailing Jesus as Son of David—and Jesus neither rebukes him nor tells him to be silent (10:46ff.)! In view of the Messianic significance of the title Son of David (12:35-37a) it is surely quite inadequate to dismiss this pericope as having nothing to do with the theory of the Messianic secret, as Wrede and those who follow him do.¹⁵

So far as the Messianic secret is concerned the publicity theme is most noticeable in the contexts where one would expect withdrawal and silence. In the healing of the paralytic Mark alone says that the proof of the miracle—his rising and

¹⁴ The argument of Wrede (140f.) and Boobyer (230) that the command to go *εἰς τὸν οἶκον σου* is a command to secrecy, since *οἶκος* denotes a place of concealment from the public elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. 7:17a, 24b; 8:26a), does not carry conviction. *οἶκος* is most definitely *not* a place of concealment in 2:1ff. and 3:20; and what is more natural and ingenuous than to encourage a man to 'go home' (5:19; 8:26)? See also Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*, 91f. Note also that the connecting participle in v. 20 is *καί* and not *δε* as in 1:45 and 7:36.

¹⁵ Wrede, 278f.; and see E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu*,² W. de Gruyter, Berlin (1968) 372.

walking off—happened *ἐμπροσθεν πάντων*—‘in full view of them all’ (2:12 NEB). And in the case of the man with the withered arm, far from performing the miracle privately Jesus commands him *ἐγειρε εἰς τὸ μέσον* and there, having first drawn all eyes upon Him, effects the healing (3:3ff.). It is true that there is a secrecy, or better, privacy motif in some of the healings: Jesus lets only Peter, James and John accompany Him to Jairus’ house and only the parents to enter the room (5:37ff.); He takes the man who was deaf and had an impediment of speech away from the crowd and performs the miracle *κατ’ ἰδίαν* (7:31–37); He also takes the blind man out of the village before He heals him (8:22–26). But the woman with the haemorrhage is healed in the crowd and it is Jesus Himself who draws attention to a cure which no one else had noticed. And Bartimaeus is healed in full view of the crowd. Nor surely was Mark naïve enough to impose a Messianic secret motif on a story like the raising of Jairus’ daughter. How could the raising of a dead girl to life be kept silent when the mourning had already begun? And why is it on several occasions after Jesus gives a strict command to silence that Mark immediately goes on to tell how the news was broadcast far and wide (1:25–28, 43–45; 7:36f.)? If the Messianic secret motif was added to explain why Jesus was not recognized as Messiah, and part of that motif is the command to demons and men not to tell of their cures, I am at a loss to understand what Mark was trying to achieve by adding or at least retaining the publicity sequel. For the whole point of these passages is that the secret commanded was *not* kept. The commands to silence failed, and so the so-called attempt to keep His Messiahship secret also failed. If the Messianic secret was a Markan theory, then these publicity passages are the *reductio ad absurdum* of that theory.¹⁶ This publicity motif may not simply be dismissed as though it left the theory of the Messianic secret unaffected.¹⁷ On the contrary, it shows that at most we can speak of a Messianic *misunderstanding*, but hardly of a Messianic *secret*.

¹⁶ My point is illustrated by Burkill’s very unconvincing treatment of 1:23ff.: Mark ‘construes the injunction to silence in the sense of a command to secrecy, and therefore takes it for granted that the congregation does not hear what the demon says to Jesus. In other words, on the evangelist’s interpretation the story is not convincing; the injunction to silence comes too late, since the secret has already been divulged’ (*Mysterious Revelation*, 71).

¹⁷ *Contra*, Strecker, 94.

There is also a very prominent theme of revelation which should not be ignored, since it too runs counter to the straight Messianic secret thesis. I will not enlarge upon it but simply call attention to its various facets—the authoritative claims made by the Markan Jesus for Himself: to forgive sins, no less (2:10); to have a mission to call (*καλέσαι*) sinners (2:17); to be sovereign (*κύριος*) over the sabbath (2:28); to be the one who binds the strong man (Satan) and ransacks his house (3:27); that loyalty to *Him* will be the yardstick of judgment in the parousia (8:38). Again there is the teaching Jesus gives to His disciples in private about the true nature of His Messiahship (8:31–33; 9:31–32; 10:32–34, 45; 14:22–25). Schweizer justifiably notes the concern with which Jesus brings God's mystery to men, especially the disciples (4:34; 7:17–23; 8:15–21, 27–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34; cf. 5:37; 9:2; 13:3f.).¹⁸ Finally, one might call attention to such passages as the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, where the Markan Jesus specifically claims a special relation of sonship and where Mark tells us that the priests and lawyers recognized that the parable was aimed at them (12:12); or again to the Bartimaeus episode where Jesus is twice hailed as Son of David (10:47f.) and to 15:39 where the centurion confesses that the *dead* Jesus was truly a or the Son of God. A theory of the Messianic secret which does not take account of these other themes which are just as prominent will inevitably give a distorted picture both of the Markan Jesus and of the Markan theology.

(3) My third criticism of Wrede's thesis is that it does not give sufficient weight to the element of historicity which is firmly attached to the motif of the Messianic secret. As I have already indicated, Wrede believed that Jesus did not claim to be Messiah during His life and that all Messianic elements were superimposed upon the tradition. And though his successors have admitted that the tradition had a Messianic stamp at an early, pre-Markan stage, they have not thereby committed themselves any more firmly to its historicity.¹⁹ But in my

¹⁸ E. Schweizer, 'Zur Frage des Messiasgeheimnis bei Markus', *ZNW* 56 (1965) 3.

¹⁹ See e.g. H. Conzelmann, 'Gegenwart und Zukunft in der synoptischen Tradition', *ZTK* 54 (1957) 294f.; Strecker, 89–93; and W. Marxsen who follows Conzelmann in arguing that it was not the non-Messianic nature of the tradition which troubled Mark but the *Messianic*, i.e. the post-resurrection, kerygmatic

opinion there are several incidents whose historicity it is almost impossible to dismiss and whose central significance has definite Messianic overtones—a significance which must have been known to and intended by Jesus.

I think first of the feeding of the 5,000. As John O'Neill observes,

we may suppose that some extraordinary event will lie behind such a miraculous narrative . . . it remains true that if Jesus did preside at a communal meal in the desert places of Galilee and Judaea, this would have had peculiar significance to his contemporaries. They would perhaps remember that Moses by praying to God was able to feed the people with manna and quail in the desert; they would perhaps be reminded of the promise that the desert would again be fruitful; and they would think of the shepherd King as they were given food in the barren places (*cf.* Pss. of Sol. xvii. 45). The Qumran desert community placed great emphasis on communal meals, and looked forward to the time when the Messiah of Aaron would preside and the Messiah of Israel, whom God had begotten among them, would come (IQSa ii. 11–22).²⁰

Even more to the point is the evidence of John 6:15 that the crowd intended to 'come and seize Jesus to proclaim him king'. C. H. Dodd argues, convincingly I think, for the historicity of John 6:14f.²¹ Most noticeable is the otherwise very odd use of ἡγάγασεν in Mark 6:45—Jesus had to force the disciples to put out into a difficult sea. The two independent traditions interlock and together provide a very coherent picture. The crowd see the Messianic significance of Jesus' action and are so carried away on a wave of mass enthusiasm that they attempt to make Him king by acclamation. The disciples themselves are caught up in the excitement, and Jesus in order to forestall the move has first to force the disciples to embark by themselves on an uninviting lake. Only then is He able to turn to the crowd

character of the tradition (*Introduction to the New Testament*, ET, Blackwell, Oxford (1968) 137).

²⁰ J. C. O'Neill, 'The Silence of Jesus', *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 163f.; see also V. Taylor, 'The Messianic Secret in Mark', *ExpT* 59 (1947–48) 149.

²¹ C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge University Press (1963) 213–216.

and with the voice of authority to dismiss them (*ἀπολύειν*). He then goes off immediately by Himself into the hills to pray—and it is perhaps significant that Mark only mentions Jesus praying three times, and that on each of the other occasions the implication is that He resorted to prayer because of temptation—temptation at the time of His early success to remain where He was so popular (1:35, 38); temptation in Gethsemane (14:35f.). So in 6:46 there is the implication that Jesus was tempted to give way to the crowd's demands—to be the Messiah of popular conception and popular appeal, and that He fled to the silence and loneliness of the hills that quiet communion with His Father might strengthen His conviction concerning the nature of His mission and Messiahship. Whether Mark was aware of the Messianic significance of the story he recorded it is hard to say; but I would strongly maintain that that significance is inherent to the historical incident he records.

I think secondly of Peter's confession in Mark 8:27ff.—a passage which caused Wrede not a little difficulty.²² Points in favour of the substantial authenticity of the pericope are: the specification and location of the place of confession (none of the traditional resurrection appearances to the Twelve took place so far north), the unique appearance of the title *Χριστός* addressed to Jesus by a disciple, the evidence that Jesus was *Pneumatiker*, and the total improbability of the primitive Church calling Peter 'Satan'. Nor should we ignore the otherwise surprising insertion *καὶ ἰδὼν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ* in verse 33a, which has the ring of an authentic reminiscence, and the Jewish character of verse 33.²³ Grundmann also calls attention to the thrice repeated *ἐπιτιμᾶν* and to the *ἤρξατο διδάσκειν* which is not the normal Markan semitism but indicates a particular point of time at which for the first time the repeated teaching referred to by the *διδάσκειν* received a concrete content.²⁴

²² See A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ET, A. & C. Black, London (1910) 340; V. Taylor, 'W. Wrede's The Messianic Secret in the Gospels', *ExpT* 65 (1953-54) 248.

²³ *SB* 1, 748.

²⁴ W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*,² Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin (1959) 167—referring to Riesenfeld, 'Tradition und Redaktion im Markus-Evangelium', *Neutestamentliche Studien für R. Bultmann*,² A. Töpelmann, Berlin (1957) 160f.

Bultmann treats the passage in his not unusual high-handed manner: Jesus obviously would not ask such a question of His disciples, since He was bound to be as informed as they were, and the original narrative *must* have contained an account of the attitude of Jesus Himself to the confession He had stimulated—a response which Bultmann finds not in verses 30–33, a Markan formulation, but in Matthew 16:17–19!²⁵ I consider that Ferdinand Hahn's description of the exchange as 'a teaching conversation' is sufficient answer to Bultmann. As a good teacher Jesus takes the initiative, but does not put the answers into His pupils' mouths. In a fascinatingly minute dissection of the text Hahn goes on to reach the conclusion that Jesus originally rejected the Messiah title as such with the implication that He did so because of its popular secular-political connotations—rather unexpected support for the view that Jesus Himself counselled silence about His Messiahship because of the popular misconception of what it involved.²⁶

Recent writers like T. J. Weeden have continued to draw particular attention to the way in which Mark's Gospel falls into two divisions, with the episode at Caesarea Philippi as the beginning of the second part.²⁷ While disagreeing with Weeden's acceptance of two opposing Christologies in Mark—a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* Christology and a suffering Christology—there is some justification for his opinion that in 8:29 Peter makes his confession to a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* Christ, and that Mark presents Jesus as correcting this false Christology by expounding His understanding of a Messiah who must suffer. For it is a fact that for the first time Mark speaks of Jesus teaching the disciples and for the first time he speaks of suffering. The only thing I do not see is why we have to attribute this decisive development to Markan theology or post-resurrection apologetic. It seems to me that what we have here is a perfectly understandable sequence of events which culminate in a turning point in Jesus' ministry. The disciples have observed at first

²⁵ R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, ET, Blackwell, Oxford (1963) 258f., followed by E. Trocmé, *La formation de l'évangile selon Marc*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris (1963) 46, 96.

²⁶ F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, ET, Lutterworth, London (1969) 223–228; cf. E. Dinkler, 'Petrusbekenntnis und Satanswort: Das Problem der Messianität Jesu', *Zeit und Geschichte* (see n. 7) 127–153.

²⁷ Weeden 145–158; see also e.g. A. Kuby, 'Zur Komposition des Markusevangeliums', *ZNW* 49 (1958) 52–64; Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*, 143ff.; Luz 29.

hand Jesus' authoritative ministry of word and action. And they have slowly come to the conclusion that He is the Messiah—not the only conclusion possible, as the opinions of others show, but a conclusion which is inescapable for his closest companions. When Jesus at last brings them to the point of crystallizing their belief in open confession He sees the time is now come to take them a further step. For their belief has been nourished almost solely on a diet of exorcisms and miracles, and the authoritative teaching they had so far heard would do little to correct a false idea of a Messiahship which consisted in the exercise of effective power. And so they must be taught that for Jesus Messiahship involves suffering. Having at last got over to them the message *that* He is Messiah, He must now explain *what kind* of Messiah. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility that Mark used this narrative in particular and intended his Gospel as a whole to combat a heretical θεϊος ἀνὴρ Christology, as Weeden argues. Theological editing²⁸ and historical reminiscences are by no means mutually exclusive factors in the preservation and development of the primitive tradition, as for example Wrede and more recently Ernst Haenchen seem to think.²⁹

I see no adequate reason, therefore, for separating 8:27–30 from 8:31ff., for the two passages cohere without any mark of artificial conjunction. It is unquestionable in my opinion that Jesus saw (or at least came to see) His mission in terms of suffering, and entirely probable that He should begin to explain this to His most intimate followers at some stage in His ministry. Nor do I feel it necessary to attribute verse 30—the command to silence—to the hand of an interpolator.³⁰ For it is not the Christ of Easter whom Peter confesses, or else why is he rebuked? And if it is the Christ of Jewish hope and popular expectation whom Peter hails³¹—as the rebuke requires—a pre-Easter origin cannot so readily be denied to

²⁸ Most noticeably the sudden appearance of the crowd caused by the Markan juxtaposition of the saying of verses 34ff. with 27–33.

²⁹ Wrede, 115; E. Haenchen, 'Die Komposition von Mk. 8.27–9.1 und Par.', *NouvT* 6 (1963) 81–109.

³⁰ The Markan style of verse 30 is no proof of its redactional origin and speaks neither for nor against the historicity of the command to silence (*contra* G. Strecker, 'Die Leidens- und Auferstehungs-voraussagen im Markusevangelium', *ZTK* 64 (1967) 22 n. 16) since the whole pericope has a Markan stamp. It suggests rather that Mark drew the story from oral tradition (*cf.* Strecker 32).

³¹ These are the two most plausible alternatives (see Dinkler 131f.).

the confession. Thus far I have the support of Hahn and Dinkler. It is with the next step that we part company. For if the confession is historical, then it seems to me that the command to silence is best explained not as part of a secondary theological motif, but as a measure taken by Jesus to prevent this false idea of Messiahship gaining fresh currency.³² This misleading and dangerous half-truth must be both silenced and corrected. Hence Jesus immediately responds both negatively and positively. In this connection note particularly how closely Matthew and Luke link the injunction to silence to the subsequent passage. Luke makes it all one sentence and Matthew indicates that Peter's confession led to repeated teaching about the nature of Messiahship. The evidence is very strong therefore for seeing in this passage a substantially accurate account of an actual event in Jesus' ministry—an event which is obviously of Messianic significance.

The third incident in which I believe historicity and Messianic significance go together is the entry into Jerusalem. On the score of historicity Vincent Taylor points to

the local expressions at the beginning, the vivid character of the account, . . . the description of what happened, the restrained nature of the acclamation, and the strange manner in which the account breaks off without any suggestion of a 'triumphal entry' (as in Mt.).³³

One might also note that the actions and shouts of those with Jesus create an impression of authenticity, because though they conform in a general way to Zechariah 9:9 they include details which are neither necessary nor even particularly appropriate—a fact which makes it unlikely that the narrative is a construction of the primitive Church.³⁴ Specially worthy of comment is the appearance of *ὡσαννα*, which is firmly embedded in the Synoptic tradition, and also in John's account, but which appears nowhere else in the New Testament—a strong indication of authenticity. I therefore find Taylor's conclusion wholly

³² The other alternative—that Jesus denied the Messianic title altogether (Hahn, Dinkler)—is shown to be inadequate by the other passages under consideration.

³³ V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*,² Macmillan, London (1956) 452.

³⁴ D. E. Nineham, *St. Mark*, A. & C. Black, London (1968) 293.

justified: 'These characteristics suggest the eyewitness rather than the artist.'³⁵

As for Messianic significance, we may note again that the passage caused Wrede's theory some difficulty. As R. H. Lightfoot observed: 'St. Mark's doctrine of the secret Messiahship of Jesus is here strained to breaking point.'³⁶ In the words of D. E. Nineham,

It is difficult to see why Jesus sent for the colt and entered the city on it unless he intended to make clear the fact of his Messiahship. Pilgrims normally entered Jerusalem on foot, so, as the story stands, the fact that Jesus deliberately procured and rode an ass makes it impossible to think of him as simply a passive figure in a demonstration which was none of his doing.³⁷

The Messianic associations of the Mount of Olives should also not go unobserved. The fact is that there is no effort on the part of Jesus to keep His Messiahship secret—certainly not in Mark's narrative, for Mark's narrative, and, I would add, the historical event, can only be construed as a clear assertion of a kind of Messiahship.

The fourth incident I want to fasten on to is the trial and condemnation of Jesus. That Jesus was found guilty of claiming to be King of the Jews is the testimony of all four Gospels (Mk. 15:26; Mt. 27:37; Lk. 23:38; Jn. 19:19). The frequent repetition of the title in Mark 15—verses 2, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32—is particularly noticeable. Since it was not a title employed by the early Church there can be little doubt, Bultmann notwithstanding, that we are on sure historical ground here: Jesus was crucified as a Messianic pretender, because of the political connotations of the title King of the Jews.³⁸ But this implies that there was some basis to the charge and the condemnation—that there were substantial grounds for applying

³⁵ Taylor, *Gospel*, 452.

³⁶ R. H. Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels*, Hodder & Stoughton, London (1934) 121.

³⁷ Nineham, 292.

³⁸ See e.g. E. Stauffer, 'Messias oder Menschensohn?' *NovT* 1 (1956) 90f.; P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (1961) 108f.; Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*, 295f.; Dinkler, 148; R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, Lutterworth, London (1965) 110; O. Betz, *What Do We know About Jesus?*, ET, SCM, London (1968) 84.

it to Jesus—that, indeed, the title was in some sense accepted by Him. The historicity of the trial scene in 15:2ff. inevitably reflects favourably on the authenticity of the earlier hearing described in 14:55ff., since it can be fairly argued that the question of Pilate (15:2) is simply the Graeco-Roman version of the question of the High Priest (14:61)—the blasphemy charge suitably nuanced for a Roman court.³⁹

Turning to that earlier hearing, the presumption is strong that Jesus did actually speak the words about building the Temple, in some form at least. Although Lohmeyer is probably correct in classifying χειροποίητον and ἀχειροποίητον as a Markan or community explanatory addition,⁴⁰ nevertheless the fact cannot be ignored that six New Testament passages testify to the saying (Mk. 14:58; 15:29; Mt. 26:61; 27:40; Jn. 2:19; Acts 6:14); and if the saying sometimes seems obscure that speaks rather in favour of than against its authenticity.⁴¹ Incidentally, the saying also attests to the power which was ascribed to Jesus—καταλύσω. It is not without relevance to the question we are studying that such power could be ascribed to Jesus by way of accusation—and it certainly testifies to some claim, by word or action, to Messianic activity and power. As attributed to Jesus by the witnesses it can only be intended and understood Messianically. The probability is high that it provided the basis of the prosecution's attack on Jesus, and Otto Betz in particular has shown how naturally an examination at that point leads on to the direct question of the High Priest: 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?'⁴²—for the building of the Temple belonged to the Messianic age (1 Enoch 90:29; 4 Ezr. 9:38–10:27; cf. Ezk. 40–48; Jub. 1:17, 27f.) and the saying involves a claim to fulfil the prophecy of Nathan (2 Sa. 7:12–14) and so to be Messiah, Son of David, and Son of God. In Bultmann's opinion, however, the fact that witnesses were not called for Jesus' Messianic claims as they were for His saying about the Temple is an indication that

³⁹ Note particularly 15:32—ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ.

⁴⁰ E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*,¹⁶ Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1963=1937) 326.

⁴¹ See also J. Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus*, ET, Mercier Press, Cork (1959) 120.

⁴² Betz, 'Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu', *NovT* 6 (1963) 24–37; see also Blinzler, 102f.; Betz, *Jesus*, 87ff.; Aune, 23f.; cf. Lohmeyer, 330; Grundmann, 302; Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*, 284f.

the two accusations did not belong together originally.⁴³ The logic behind this line of reasoning eludes me. If anything the absence of witnesses testifies to Jesus' reticence about Messianic claims or to His complete failure to make an unequivocal claim, by word of mouth at least.

But if we can find no adequate reason to dispute the authenticity of the course of questioning, what are we to make of Jesus' reply to the High Priest's question? It is here that Wrede's thesis breaks down completely. For however affirmative or evasive were his opening words—and we shall return to this point shortly—there is no doubt that the High Priest understood the reply as a Messianic claim: the High Priest's tearing of his clothes was hardly prompted by the *silence* of Jesus.⁴⁴ In the words of Montefiore, 'We must surely believe that the Messiahship claim was at least ventilated, and that it was resolved that Jesus was to be denounced to Pilate on that ground'.⁴⁵ We need not discuss at greater length the actual saying of 14:62. Among the indications of authenticity one might mention the unique use of the motif of sitting on the right hand of God and the divergence of 14:62 from Psalm 110:1. The sitting motif is unusual, for if we take it as signifying a stage of exaltation before and apart from the parousia, then it is unique in the Synoptic tradition;⁴⁶ if, on the other hand, we take it as referring to the Parousia, what evangelist would retain the *ὁψεσθε* other than one very faithful to his sources? In addition we have to reckon with Matthew's *ἀπ' ἄρτι* and Luke's *ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν*, which together suggest that they were both following a non-Greek source. Further, with reference to the charge that 14:62 shows signs of a conflation of ideas which can only be post-resurrection in origin, we may refer to 1 Enoch 62:5, which as F. H. Borsch has recently pointed out, brings together seeing, Son of man, and sitting, in a manner very similar to that of Mark 14:62.⁴⁷ I conclude then that

⁴³ Bultmann, 270.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Gospel*, 569.

⁴⁵ C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*,² Macmillan, London (1927) I, 357.

⁴⁶ H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, ET, SCM, London (1963) 39.

⁴⁷ F. H. Borsch, 'Mark xiv 62 and I Enoch lxii 5', *NTS* 14 (1967-68) 565-567. Although there is a very large question mark against the pre-Christian origin of the Similitudes of Enoch (37-71), the two passages in question are probably independent of each other.

here we have another incident whose historicity is well grounded and whose central significance is pre-eminently Messianic.

II

Wrede's thesis that the Messianic secret motif had a theological rather than a historical origin was based on his conclusion that certain elements of that motif were clearly *unhistorical*. We are now in a position to stand Wrede's line of reasoning on its head, for our conclusion thus far is that certain elements of that motif are clearly *historical*; that is, that the Messianic character of the tradition is not the result of Mark's redaction, or of pre-Markan but post-resurrection Christian theology—it belongs to the incidents themselves. On the basis of *that* conclusion we can now present the thesis that contrary to Wrede the so-called 'Messianic secret' motif had a historical rather than theological origin. To argue this thesis in depth is beyond the scope of this paper, but the four incidents already examined almost constitute proof enough.

First the feeding of the 5,000. The important points which emerge here are first: that there was abroad, in Galilee at least, a popular conception of the Messiah as a political kingly figure—the sort of King of the Jews that Pilate felt justified in crucifying; that Jesus was a Messiah of this type was the conclusion reached by those whom Jesus miraculously fed in the desert. The second important point is the evidence of how Jesus reacted against this attempt to force a false Messianic role on Him. He saw all too clearly how politically inflammable the Galilean crowd was. The lesson learned, or confirmed by this effect of His display of authority would go a long way towards explaining his reticence in other situations.

With regard to Peter's confession, the interesting thing is again Jesus' reaction. Peter hails Him as Messiah; and how does Jesus respond? There is certainly no question of His denying the title—but there is also no indication of His accepting it beyond the impersonal *περὶ αὐτοῦ* of 8:30. 8:30 is a word neither of rebuke nor of congratulation. It is a command to silence followed immediately by explicit and very pointed teaching about the nature of His Messiahship. The implication is strong that Peter was little further forward than the

Galilean crowd in his understanding of Jesus' Messiahship. The command to silence is given not so much because Jesus' Messiahship is secret, but because it is misunderstood.⁴⁸

In the entry into Jerusalem three points call for attention. The first is that Mark carefully avoids making the Messianic character of the event fully explicit. The Zechariah prophecy is not referred to; the ovation seems to come from the disciples rather than the crowd, and the cries of welcome fall short of complete Messianic recognition and homage. The second is the manner of Jesus' entry: He comes as the humble king who speaks peace, not as the political King of the Jews. The third is the fact that the authorities did not immediately pull Jesus in and that no reference seems to have been made to the entry at the trial—a fact which suggests that no political significance was seen or could easily be read into the entry. In short, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was an enacted parable about the nature of His Messiahship. Those whose ears were attuned to catch political overtones heard nothing. Those who looked and listened for the coming of the Kingdom saw something of eschatological and Messianic significance, but fell short of full understanding.⁴⁹

In the trial of Jesus once again interest centres on Jesus' response to the questions put to Him by the High Priest and by Pilate. I am much impressed by the arguments in favour of the longer reading in 14:62. What scribe faced by the triumphant and unequivocal *ἐγὼ εἰμι* would dilute it to the colourless and equivocal *ὃ ἐλεας δεῖ εἶναι ἐγὼ εἰμι*? And the longer reading certainly accounts for the texts of Matthew and Luke. In that case Jesus' reply to the High Priest is very similar to His reply to Pilate. To both questions—'Are you the Christ?' and 'Are you the King of the Jews?'—Jesus answers in effect, 'You could put it that way'. He accepts the titles, but at the same time makes it clear that He does not attach the same significance to them as do His questioners (*cf.* Jn. 18:33–37). These exchanges are important in that they exemplify the dilemma which must constantly have confronted Jesus—could He accept or use *simpliciter* titles which meant one thing to Himself and something very different to His hearers?

⁴⁸ Cf. O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, ET, SCM, London (1959) 124f.

⁴⁹ See also Stauffer, 85ff.

The conclusions I draw from studying these passages are that Jesus believed Himself to be Messiah, but that His conception of the Messianic role was an unexpected and unpopular one. Because the title Messiah had such different connotations to Jesus and to those who heard Him He never once used it of Himself or unequivocally welcomed its application to Him by others;⁵⁰ and when His actions or words seemed to encourage the to Him false conception of Messiahship He tried to prevent it by commands to silence. Nevertheless He did not take what might appear the easiest course—that of completely renouncing the title. He did not deny His right to the title, but attempted to re-educate His hearers in the significance of it for Him. And the claims He made to Messiahship and Messianic authority were of a parabolic sort whose significance was there, plain for all to see whose eyes were not blinded and whose ears were not clogged by misconceptions (8:17–21).

These conclusions follow directly from the four passages we examined. But I believe that they hold true for the whole of the Markan tradition, and to round off the argument I will merely illustrate the force of this contention by drawing attention to three other motifs which shed light over the whole Gospel. First of all, the motif of authoritative teaching and action. I refer in particular to the section 2:1–3:6. There are good grounds I think for seeing this as a pre-Markan block of material in which we are given a cameo of Jesus' whole ministry and of the impact made by His teaching on the Jewish authorities—the decision on the part of the Pharisees and Herodians to destroy Jesus is remarkably early and unproductive otherwise. In that case it is worth noticing that Mark has made no attempt to impose any of the elements of the 'Messianic secret' on the section. On the contrary we have four very definite claims made by Jesus to very considerable status and authority—authority to forgive sins (2:10), authority to command and call (*καλέσαι*) people (2:14, 17), status as bridegroom (2:19—in the context of Old Testament thought a very pointed and meaningful metaphor) and status and authority as Lord over the sabbath (2:27; 3:4–6). In none of these incidents could it be said that Jesus

⁵⁰ Cf. Boobyer, 229–231; O'Neill, 159ff. For supporting arguments from rabbinic traditions concerning Jesus see Stauffer, 94–102.

was explicitly claiming to be Messiah, but in each case there were Messianic overtones—overtones which the individual seeking the truth and open to new revelation would be able to recognize.⁵¹

Secondly, there is the parabolic nature of Jesus' teaching to which attention is drawn in chapter 4. I do not wish to become involved in a discussion of the significance of the *ἴνα* in 4:10, with its seemingly double predestinarian ring.⁵² I would only draw attention again to the *τὰ πάντα* in 4:11: 'to you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom, but to those outside all things are in parables', or, as Jeremias translates, 'all things are obscure'. Bearing in mind 4:33f., I take the parallelism of this verse to signify that *all* Jesus' teaching was in the nature of a parable; that is, to those who had ears to hear (4:9) the parable unfolded its meaning; but to those whose ears were dulled to the note of divine authority the parable gave no light. The saying has to be read together with those of verses 21–22, as the repetition of the challenge to hear aright makes clear (4:9, 23). Jesus came to give light, and His teaching shed light enough; nevertheless that light was hidden for many, and would remain so for the time being, till either the resurrection or the parousia. I have no doubt that this double-edged quality of Jesus' teaching was His own choice. Rather than a straightforward statement of certain truths which would register on most of His hearers' understanding but make no impact on their emotions or their will, Jesus deliberately chose to speak in parables so that the truth thus conveyed might have maximum impact, even if only on a few.⁵³ Kierkegaard grasped the rationale behind Jesus' method when he wrote,

Christianity, by becoming a direct communication, is

⁵¹ Cf. Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation*, 134 n. 37. On the Messianic nature of Jesus' teaching see Aune, 26ff. Particularly worth noticing, as underlining the marked effect of his openly displayed authority, is the amazement motif (1:2, 27; 2:12; 5:20, 42; 6:2, 51; 7:37; 9:15; 10:32; 11:18; 12:17; 15:5). In particular, 9:15, 15:5, and especially 10:32 bear witness to Jesus' tremendous presence.

⁵² But see J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*,⁶ ET, SCM, London (1963) 13–18; and we would do well to heed C. F. D. Moule's plea against interpreting the passage with 'prosaic solemnity' (*The Gospel according to Mark*, Cambridge University Press (1965) 36). Among the marks of authenticity the most noticeable is the agreement of the reference to Is. 6:9f. with the Targum rather than the Hebrew or LXX (see Jeremias, 15).

⁵³ The objection that Jesus would have made it plain that He was *not* a political Messiah fails to reckon with the parabolic nature of *all* Jesus' action and teaching.

altogether destroyed. It becomes a superficial thing, capable neither of inflicting deep wounds, nor of healing them.⁵⁴

Thirdly, I would point to the phrase 'Son of man', the self-designation preferred by Jesus, as I believe it to be. Again we enter a much-ploughed field, and I will not attempt to plough a fresh furrow. Suffice it to say that the work of Geza Vermes on the one hand, and of Morna Hooker on the other, serve to underline how fully that phrase exemplifies the parabolic nature of Jesus' Messianic claims. Vermes cites several examples of Aramaic usage which seem to support the view that *bar nash(a)* could have been used by Jesus as a circumlocution for 'I', and that the phrase could have been understood by His hearers in that sense.⁵⁵ Nor can the link between the Markan Son of man and the Danielic Son of man so well forged by Miss Hooker be easily broken.⁵⁶ In the words of Matthew Black: 'No term was more fitted both to conceal, yet at the same time to reveal to those who had ears to hear, the Son of Man's real identity.'⁵⁷ Here is the real vehicle of the 'Messianic secret'.

Finally, attention should also be drawn to the parallel noted by Richard Longenecker between the Synoptic Jesus on the one hand and the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness and Simeon ben Kosebah on the other. Common features in each case include (a) external acclamation, (b) reticence on the part of the individual to speak of himself in terms used of him by others, and (c) consciousness on that individual's part of the ultimate validity of the titles employed. The basis of this common pattern Longenecker finds not in any 'Messianic secret' theology, but in the Jewish view that 'no man can be defined as a messiah before he has accomplished the task of the anointed'.⁵⁸ If this is so it certainly enhances the historicity of the Synoptic picture.

⁵⁴ Cited by V. de Waal, *What is the Church?* SCM, London (1969) 22.

⁵⁵ G. Vermes in an appendix to M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*,³ Clarendon Press, Oxford (1967) 310-328; although see J. A. Fitzmeyer's critical review in *CBQ* 30 (1968) 424-428.

⁵⁶ M. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark*, SPCK, London (1967).

⁵⁷ Black, 329; see also I. H. Marshall, 'The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion', *NTS* 12 (1965-66) 350f.; cf. E. Sjöberg, *Der verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien*, C. W. K. Gleerup, Lund (1955) 126; O'Neill, 161.

⁵⁸ Longenecker, 211-214, citing David Flusser.

In short, I believe that to speak of a Messianic *secret* is misleading and unjustified. So far as Jesus' Messiahship was concerned there was no secret as such, only a cautious disavowal of false views—those of the Galilean wonder-worker and of the warrior or political King of the Jews—and an equally cautious assertion and explication of His own understanding of Messiahship—that of service and suffering in this world and of exaltation only after death. As to the reason for this, all the Evangelists agree: Jesus was indeed Messiah during His earthly life, but His Messiahship was incomplete and inevitably misunderstood during that phase. Only with the cross, resurrection and exaltation would He enter into the fullness of His Messianic office, and only then could its true nature be properly understood by men. John brings this out through the *δοξάζειν* and *κρίσις* motifs. Luke brings it out by developing his three-age presentation of *Heilsgeschichte*. In Matthew one sees it in the Kingdom sayings, for instance in the link between the Spirit and the Kingdom in Matthew 12:28: it is because and only because Jesus is the one who is empowered by the Spirit that the Kingdom can be said to have come upon them and be fully in their midst, though not yet fully realized. And in Mark it is the 'Messianic secret' which is the vehicle of this theme. In other words, the so-called secrecy motif in Mark is nothing other than *Mark's* method of bringing home to his readers *the programmatic nature of Jesus' Messiahship*.

In conclusion, Wrede's thesis has been subjected to many criticisms in the course of its life. For example, form criticism has shown that the silencing of demons is a feature antecedent to any 'Messianic secret' redaction,⁵⁹ and that the privacy motif (see pp. 99 ff.) has nothing to do with the 'Messianic secret'.⁶⁰ The conclusion that the Messianic character of the tradition belongs to a primitive form of the tradition (see p. 101) has also reduced the form critic's confidence when it comes to pronouncing on the historical value of the tradition. Besides which it has become evident that passages like 8:30 do not provide independent evidence for the redactional nature of the secrecy

⁵⁹ See p. 97; also H. C. Kee, 'The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories', *NTS* 14 (1967-68) 232-246.

⁶⁰ M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, ET, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, London (1934) 73f.; Bultmann, 224.

motif since the more sceptical conclusions there usually depend on a prior acceptance of the Wrede hypothesis.

However, the full significance for Wrede's thesis of the post-Bultmannian Quest of the Historical Jesus does not seem to have been fully appreciated. For the nub of the debate is the Messianic self-consciousness of Jesus and the Messianic character of His ministry, not the authenticity of this Messianic title or that command to silence. And the new questers have found that though they can still pronounce a confident negative judgment on the authenticity of this Messianic title or that command to silence, it is almost impossible to deny that Jesus saw His mission at least to some extent in Messianic terms or that His authentic words and deeds bear an unmistakably Messianic character.⁶¹ When one adds, as one must, that Jesus' concept and practice of His mission was popular with the people but unpopular with the authorities, it becomes evident that the whole 'Messianic secret' thesis has been stripped of the logical consistency which bound it together and is in danger of falling apart at the seams. The 'Messianic secret' hypothesis in fact is now a theory searching for a rationale, and the recent attempts to defend and define its *raison d'être* in terms of an anti-*θεῖος ἀνὴρ* polemic (n. 3) or an anti-disciple polemic (n. 8) must be pronounced inadequate. Since the 'Messianic secret' motif is part and parcel of the tradition itself we are at the end of the day more or less shut up to the choice between the mere 'that'-ness of complete Bultmannian scepticism and a Jesus who was a secret or rather a misunderstood Messiah.

We have not been able to study all the relevant data, and I do not want to overstate my case. I would not deny, for example, that Mark may have interpreted simple commands to silence demons in terms of the 'Messianic secret' motif (1:34; 3:11f.) or that it is Mark's own opinion about the disciples which is being expressed in passages like 6:51-52; 14:40b. But the question is whether this interpretation and opinion expresses an understanding of the material which is essentially foreign to it, or whether it is merely developing a theme which

⁶¹ See e.g. E. Käsemann, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', *Essays on New Testament Themes*, ET, SCM, London (1964) 37-43; G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, ET, Hodder & Stoughton, London (1960) 169-172, 178.

is already native to the material. When one takes into account the complexity of the secrecy motif (which reflects the complexity of life rather than the artificial complicatedness of a theory—see for example nn. 6, 16), the counter-balancing publicity-revelation theme, the inherent Messianic character of the pericope we examined, and the very strong probability which emerged from that examination that there were two understandings of Messiahship at issue, I cannot but conclude that the so-called 'Messianic secret' originated in the life-situation of Jesus and is in essence at least wholly historical.