

How is Jesus understood, according to the summary in Mk 1:14 f.?

Is he understood, as Marxsen claims, as "one who in the midst of the old age again and again lived the rule of God," or rather "as one who in the midst of the old age again and again decisively represented (and represents) the possibility of *our* living God's rule"?

In either case, he would have been understood as having opposed himself to the old age and provoked its resistance against his working and therewith against himself.

That Jesus healed on the sabbath naturally called forth a reaction from those who held it to be God's will that no work be done on the sabbath. That his praxis of fasting was either lax or nonexistent outraged those those for whom one must first do something to bring about communion with God, either by fasting or by scrupulously observing the prescriptions concerning purity. That Jesus also invited to his table both rich publicans who were collaborators with the occupying power and sinners, or people of the land, who made no particular effort seriously to keep, or even to know, all the commandments of the law was unheard of, since anyone seriously concerned with God didn't do such things, but rather was partial to those who knew God's law and kept it. And this, too, brought him into opposition to current opinion.

Thus the upholders of the "divine order" turned against him. And from their standpoint, they had every good reason to do so, since two very different "conceptions" were here being opposed to one another. On the one side stood the representatives of an order that had gradually established itself in the course of history. On the other side, what was at issue was not orientation to this order, or to the law determining it, but rather an *ly* > immediate orientation to God.

This is not to imply that the old age is identical with a world that is (morally) corrupt through and through. It is not simply a world in which there is nothing but murder and killing, stealing and adultery, lying and deception. Naturally, these things are *also* present in it. But the old age is

caricatured if they alone are taken to characterize it. For it is also a world in which human beings definitely can and do live in an ordered way; and if this order is broken, it itself is definitely in position to limit the costs and to restore itself. The situation becomes dangerous only when orderly, upstanding persons in the old age assert that all this is life in accordance with God's will, while yet others respond by asserting over against them that none of this has anything really to do with *God*. Now there is a conflict, because there is no agreement about God. Who is defining God rightly?

The conflict begins verbally and argumentatively—witness the controversies that Jesus risks involving himself in—but it does not end there (cf. Mk 3:6). Because what is at issue in the conflict is theology, the question is, Who is rightly defining God? And this question is answered christologically: on the basis of his working, as in the controversies, which is understood as eschatological working, Jesus himself is qualified as the Son of Man. It is the Son of Man who has power on earth to forgive sins (Mk 2:10), and who is also Lord of the sabbath (Mk 2:28). But it is also the Son of Man whom the upholders of law and order want to do away with in the name of *their* God.