F. H. BORSCH

7

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON "THE SON OF MAN:" The Origins and Development of the Title

"'Embarrassing' might be the kindest word for it," is how I described the status of the Son of Man problem in 1967.[1] Unfortunately, despite all that has been written on the subject during the past twenty years, not much has changed in this regard. The term, so central to the Gospels' presentations of Jesus, is yet elusive with respect to its background, its possible use by Jesus, and its role in the mission and Christology of the early churches. After reviewing studies by S. Kim and B. Lindars, P. J. Achtemeier concluded, "Despite the careful work of both scholars, the mutually exclusive nature of their respective conclusions shows that there is as yet no scholarly consensus even on the way to approach the problem of Jesus as the 'Son of Man.'"[2]

Certainly, however, there are camps of scholarly opinion, and at several points during this period it did appear that a broader consensus was beginning to emerge. Following Rudolf Bultmann and the work of H. E. Tödt, a number of scholars in the middle 1960s, including Ferdinand Hahn, Reginald Fuller, Günther Bornkamm, and A. J. B. Higgins, believed that a reasonably clear picture could be delineated.[3] There were permutations in their

1. F. H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 15 [hereafter *SMMH*].

2. P. J. Achtemeier, *JBL* 105 (1986) 335. In his reviews (pp. 332–35) of S. Kim, *"The Son of Man" as the Son of God* (Grand Rapids, 1985) and B. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels in the Light of Recent Research* (Grand Rapids, 1984).

3. R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968), pp. 120–30; H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1965); F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (London, 1969); R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York, 1965), pp. 119–25; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, 1960), pp. 175–78, 228–31; A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (London, 1964). Similarly also C. Colpe, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in *TDNT*, vol. 8 (1972), pp. 400–77, and "Der Begriff 'Menschensohn' und die Methode der Erforschung messianischer Prototypen," *Kairos*, N.F. 11 (1969) 241–63; 12 (1970) 81–112; 14 (1972) 241–57. (See Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* [SNTS MS 39; Cambridge, 1980], who also uses the theory of the circumlocution idiom to explain the origin of some of the earthy Son of Man sayings). See my review of this and other positions in 1967 in *SMMH*, 15–54.

theories, and differences over the degree to which Jesus may or may not have linked himself and his mission with the figure, but it was agreed that the references to the Son of Man as a figure on earth and as one who was to suffer were compositions of the early communities (or possibly in a few cases they resulted from a misunderstanding of "son of man" used as a first person circumlocution). The earliest of the Son of Man sayings spoke of a heavenly figure who would appear as judge and vindicator. While Jesus may have looked for his own vindication and that of his followers in association with this Son of Man, sayings which may be attributed to him are characterized by his speaking of the Son of Man as another.[4] These relatively few sayings are traceable to the community responsible for the putative Q source. Their eschatological expectation and faith in Jesus formed the crucible in which the more developed Christian Son of Man teachings began to take shape.

The vision of Dan 7:13–14 was the source for the conception of the Son of Man figure, though Daniel's "one like a son of man" (כבר אנש) was descriptive rather than titular in character. The so-called Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71) and 4 Ezra 13, and perhaps certain rabbinic references, were parallel developments within Judaism and constituted evidence for a generalized expectation regarding a Son of Man figure at the time of Jesus.

Two factors were critical in the questioning of this consensus. In the first place, a number of scholars became far less certain that there was any general Son of Man conception in Judaism at the time of Jesus. The lack of 1 Enoch 37–71 at Qumran, and a possible later date for it with its Son of Man references, along with a different way of reading the Gospel sayings and other materials, led to the suspicion that this Jewish Son of Man conception was "created, not by the thinkers of New Testament times, but by modern critical scholarship."[5] It was still possible, however, to preserve a form of the consensus by arguing that Jesus or later disciples had first fashioned the Son of Man conception on the basis of Dan 7:13–14. In the more sophisticated form of this theory, it was held that the font of the Son of Man tradition was a pesher which brought an earlier statement about vindication and exaltation ("sit at my right hand") drawn from Ps 110:1 together with Dan 7:13 and perhaps with other scriptural references as well.[6] This basic saying (now

4. Higgins in *Son of Man* (1980) maintains that Jesus thought of himself as the destined Son of Man.

5. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man*, p. 8. Among others see R. Leivestad, "Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 18 (1971–72) 243–67.

6. Perrin developed and refined this position in a series of essays, "Mark xiv.62: The End Product of a Christian Pesher Tradition?" *NTS* 12 (1965–66) 150–55; "The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism and Primitive Christianity: A Suggestion," *BR* 11 (1966) 17–28; "The Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions by Mark," *USQR* 23 (1967–68) 357–65; "The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition," *BR* 13 (1968) 3–25. They are now collected in his *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Chronology* (Philadelphia, 1974). Zech 12:10 was also seen to have played a part and W. O. Walker, Jr., added Ps 8, esp. vss. 5–8, a suggestion accepted by Perrin, *Pilgrimage*, pp. 19, 21–22. See Walker's survey, "The Son of Man: Some Recent Developments," *CBQ* 45 (1983)

found in Mk 14:62 and parallels), which Tödt and others had seen as a later development,[7] was now viewed as the basis for the entire Son of Man tradition.

Far more damaging to the consensus has been the contention that the earliest of the Gospels' Son of Man sayings derive from utterances which made use of the Aramaic phrase בר (א)נש(א) as a way of referring to the speaker. Sayings such as "the son of man has nowhere to lay his head" in Mt 8:20, (Lk 9:58), and "whoever says a word against the son of man" in Mt 12:32, (Lk 12:10), are based on this way of speaking and could go back to Jesus in reference to his earthly ministry. Originally, however, these logia did not use בר (א)נש(א) as a title, much less with reference to a heavenly, exalted figure. That phase came relatively later when the idiom was linked with Dan 7:13–14 and Jesus was seen as the heavenly one referred to in scripture. This identification then interacted with the whole of the developing tradition.

A version of this way of solving the Son of Man problem was first proposed in its modern dress in a paper delivered by Geza Vermes in 1965, and it has been refined, with significant variations, by Vermes and developed by Maurice Casey, Barnabas Lindars, Günther Schwarz and others.[8] Schwarz is in-

584–607, and, for more detail, "The Origin of the Son of Man Concept as Applied to Jesus," *JBL* 91 (1972) 482–90. In the same discussion Perrin also made use of Hendrikus Boers' suggestion that Psalms 16 and 18 were critical in the formation of resurrection faith which came to include an identification of Jesus with the Son of Man. See Boers, "Psalm 16 and the Historical Origin of the Christian Faith," *ZNW* 60 (1969) 107–10 and "Where Christology Is Real: A Survey of Recent Research on New Testament Christology," *Int* 26 (1972) 300–27.

7. Tödt, *Son of Man*, pp. 36–40.

8. Vermes' 1965 paper was published as "The Use of בר נשא/בר נש in Jewish Aramaic" in the 3rd ed. of M. Black's *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 310–28, and also in his *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 147–65. Then see his "'The Son of Man' Debate," *JSNT* 1 (1978) 19–32 and "The Present State of the 'Son of Man' Debate," *JJS* 29 (1978) 123–34, also in his *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 89–99; M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London, 1979); B. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination:* G. Schwarz, *Jesus "der Menschensohn": Aramaistische Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Menschensohnworten Jesu* (BWANT 119; Stuttgart, 1986). See also M. Müller, *Der Ausdruck "Menschensohn" in den Evangelien: Voraussetzungen und Bedeutung* (*Acta Theologica Danica* 17; Leiden, 1984) and "The Expression 'the Son of Man' as Used by Jesus," *ST* 38 (1984) 47–64. The earlier stages of the debate were carried on by H. Lietzmann, J. Wellhausen, A. Meyer, N. Schmidt, N. Messel, R. H. Charles, G. Dalman, and P. Fiebig over a fifteen-year period around the beginning of this century. For a bibliography and a review of that discussion, see E. Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch* (Lund, 1946), pp. 40–60 and his "בן אדם and בר אנש im Hebräischen und Aramäischen," *Acta Orientalia* 21 (1950) 57–65, 91–107.

In subsequent discussion Casey has continued to argue for a more generic use of the idiom inclusive of all men, including the speaker. See his "The Jackals and the Son of Man (Mt 8.20, par. Luke 9.58)," *JSNT* 23 (1985) 3–22. Lindars has resisted Richard Bauckham's suggestion ("The Son of Man: 'A Man in My Position' or 'Someone'?" *JSNT* 23 [1985] 23–33) that the idiom was more likely used indefinitely to refer to "someone" with whom the speaker could more appropriately identify himself and which usage would better fit a number of Jesus' sayings. The phrase, Lindars argues, was used emphatically with the generic article in such a way as to allow

sistent that by recognizing and trying to recreate the Aramaic origins of many Gospel sayings, we can often find their earlier meaning.[9] Lindars has nuanced the understanding of the use of the idiom with the "generic article" by maintaining that it was not a means of making a general statement in which the speaker included himself, nor an exclusive self-reference, but a form making "idiomatic use of reference to a class of persons with whom he identified himself"[10]—"a man in my position" or "a man such as I." It was a way of making a self-reference, often obliquely and sometimes as a way of defending oneself. At times there is a certain irony intended in its use and a measure of deference.

It is a strength of this thesis that it seeks to explain the remarkable fact that the Son of Man phrase/reference is used only by Jesus and never confessionally by the churches. Because it was remembered as a distinctive form of Jesus' speech, the developing tradition continued to put it only on the lips of Jesus. The turning point came with the translation of the tradition into Greek, thus losing any sense of the idiom and giving the phrase a peculiar status in Greek. ". . . [T]he translation of the sayings in Greek had a catalytic effect on the development of Christology."[11] The phrase became an exclusive self-reference and later became linked with Dan 7:13–14 in the process of viewing Jesus as an exalted, heavenly figure.

Lindars goes on to seek a setting-in-life for many of the Son of Man logia. A number of the sayings which refer to the Son of Man on earth and even some of the logia about suffering likely go back to Jesus' use of the idiom. Other sayings are interpreted as part of the developing tradition.

Although Lindars, Casey, and Schwarz also do not see the need to posit a Son of Man conception which existed in Judaism prior to the Gospels, they, of course, diverge widely from those who view Dan 7:13 and a Christian pesher usage as the source of the Son of Man teaching. The two camps almost wholly invert the order in which they see the sayings being formed.

Those who favor an origin of the Son of Man tradition in sayings about exaltation and eschatology are joined by others who have raised various criticisms of the idiomatic periphrasis thesis. Even granted the coinage of the idiom at the time of Jesus in Palestine, they ask whether some of the very Son of Man sayings on which Lindars and others most rest their case make good sense as having reference to a class of human beings of whom Jesus would have been one. Is there not a sense of distinctive status to "the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2:10, par. Mt 9:6, Lk 5:24)

---

reference to the speaker as one of a class of persons. See Lindars, "Response to Richard Bauckham: The Idiomatic Use of Bar Enasha," *JSNT* 23 (1985) 35–41.

9. See his *Und Jesus Sprach* (BWANT 118; Stuttgart, 1985).

10. Lindars, *Son of Man*, pp. 23–24

11. Ibid., p. 26.

and "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Mt 11:16–19, par. Lk 7:33–34)? Indeed, in the latter case what would be the point of contrast between the man John and a class of men among whom Jesus includes himself? Even in what appears to be the most obvious case for human lowliness ("the son of man has nowhere to lay his head" in Mt 8:20, par. Lk 9:58), it may well seem that some distinctive situation is being referred to. In the critical saying of Lk 12:8–9 (however it is reconstructed and seen in relation to Mt 10:32–33 and Mk 8:38 with Lk 9:26),[12] it is not easy to view the one who will acknowledge before the angels of God those who acknowledge him as but a member of a class of human beings.[13]

Nor does everyone grant the widespread character of the idiom at the time of Jesus. In a series of articles[14] J. A. Fitzmyer has been the leading critic in this regard, holding that Vermes has been able to produce only one unambiguously circumlocutional usage of the idiom and that "it remains to be shown that this represents a first-century Palestinian usage."[15] Fitzmyer questions whether Vermes' major examples come from the Aramaic of Jesus' time. He points particularly to the lack of the initial aleph in these examples as a sign of lateness.

One must also ask questions about the role of the final aleph. We, of course, cannot be sure that בר (א)נשא was used emphatically in any underlying Aramaic sayings, but the almost invariable definite Greek usage in the Gospels could well suggest that it was, even if (which is not certain) the emphatic and nonemphatic forms could be used interchangeably in the Aramaic of Jesus' time. It has reasonably been suggested that this consistent use of the noun with a definite article may indicate a special emphasis; i.e., not just any son of man but *the* Son of Man whom hearers are expected to regard in a significant manner.[16]

12. See Lindars, *Son of Man*, pp. 48–58 and below pp. 143–44.

13. See also the critique of the interpretation of Lk 12:8–9 as using the בר (א)נש(א) idiom by M. Black, "Aramaic Barnāshā and the Son of Man," *ExpT* 95 (1984) 200–6 and the response by M. Casey to this and Black's other criticisms in "Aramaic Idiom and Son of Man Sayings," *ExpT* 96 (1985) 233–37.

14. J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1973–74) 382–407; "Methodology in the Study of the Aramaic Substratum of Jesus' Sayings in the New Testament," in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, ed. J. Dupont (BETL 40; Gembloux, 1975), pp. 73–102. Both these essays (the latter revised as "The Aramaic Background of the New Testament") are in his *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, 1979), pp. 85–113 and 1–27 respectively, as is "The New Testament Background Philologically Considered," pp. 143–60. Also "Another View of the Son of Man Debate," *JSNT* 4 (1979) 56–68.

15. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, p. 153.

16. C. F. D. Moule suggests that the insistent use of the Greek articles indicates a demonstrative force ("that Son of Man" referring to Dan 7:13) and that the underlying Aramaic used some demonstrative form as do the Syriac translations of the Gospels and the Similitudes of Enoch.

It would be somewhat foolish, however, to argue that some form of בר (א)נש(א) could not have been used as a means of circumlocution on occasion. "Man" or "a man" can be employed as a periphrasis for the speaker in a number of languages. In my 1967 response to Vermes' thesis, I suggested an example in English: "A man can't work miracles. What do you expect of me?"[17] The argument, therefore, should not be over whether such a form of periphrasis can occur in Aramaic, but whether it seems to have been current and widespread, and also makes the best sense of the Gospel sayings. In the first respect the evidence seems at least to be scanty, and the case for best sense is highly debatable.

It is an aspect of our "embarrassment" regarding the Son of Man materials that the evidence seems so open to different understandings by the best trained scholars. People who find good measures of consensus on a number of other New Testament issues can differ widely about the Son of Man. What for one group is early and Aramaic is for another late and formed in a Greek-speaking milieu, and vice versa. For some it is eschatology and then reflection on the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus which gave birth to the Son of Man tradition. For others this stage came relatively late in the development.

In these circumstances it is understandable that scholarship might want to minimize or even partially overlook the problem. In some discussions of Jesus and the Gospels it could be hard for an outsider to recognize the importance that the Son of Man phrase has in the Gospels.[18] One way of dealing with the problem as far as the historical Jesus is concerned is, of course, to locate the formation of all Son of Man sayings in the churches, and one must wonder if there is not today a bias in that direction in order to help deal with the "embarrassment." Scholarship is still obligated, however, to find convincing life-settings for the origin and development of the Son of Man tradition in early Christianity (remembering that the evangelists' redactional use of materials does not always also explain their origin), and clearly no consensus has emerged in this regard.[19]

"Neglected Features in the Problem of 'the Son of Man'" in *Neues Testament und Kirche*, ed J. Gnilka (Freiburg, 1974), pp. 413–28 and *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 11–16.

17. Borsch, *SMMH*, p. 23, n. 4.

18. In a recent popular article on Jesus, researched through conversation with and the reading of a number of contemporary New Testament scholars and theologians, Cullen Murphy speaks only once of the some seventy occasions in which Jesus refers to himself as "'the Son of Man,' a designation that appears to be somehow mystical and significant." *The Atlantic Monthly* (December 1986) 37–58.

19. Walker offers the suggestion that "the Son of Man Christology originated, flourished, and, for the most part, died within what can be called the 'Q Community'," *CBQ* (1983) 607. This has the virtue of some specificity but places the origin and development in a hypothetical community about which little is really known despite all the research on the subject. It also seems

One can appreciate, therefore, why some scholars would want to stand back and look at the totality of the tradition again. While it is not hard to find reasons for relegating various sayings and particular parts of the tradition to later church creativity, might it not be that where there is so much smoke there once was a fire—that there is something deeper in the tradition that has caused this rather widespread phenomenon? It at least continues to be remarkable that the phrase is, for all intents and purposes, confined to use by Jesus. It remains surprising that what has touched, if not profoundly colored, many strands of Gospel tradition has had no clearly evident effect on other New Testament writers. By the two toughest standards of "authenticity" with respect to the traditions (dissimilarity and multiple attestation), the Son of Man usage has much better than a prima facie case for being taken seriously. Those who hold that a Son of Man conception was not current in Judaism recognize its dissimilarity from Jewish thinking. Although one can make a circular argument that the Gospels themselves are evidence for its currency among early Christians, there continues to be virtually no evidence outside the Gospels that this was so.

With respect to the criterion of multiple attestation, the phrase is found in Mark, in so-called Q as well as special Lucan and special Matthean material, and in John. It is in miracle and pronouncement stories, in strands of parabolic tradition, and in the passion narratives. In a number of different settings in the Gospels it is found in various kinds of sayings, wisdom logia, prophecies, and judgment pronouncements.

Joachim Jeremias argued that, where there were parallel sayings in which one version had a form of the first person pronoun and another the Son of Man, the latter were secondary.[20] This was an indication that use of the designation was in the process of development. I have countered that the evidence points the other way round.[21] Others, assessing our arguments, have judged that the evidence is too mixed to draw a directional line.[22] Nonetheless, there is at least some cause in this regard, and also with respect to the criteria for authenticity, for holding that the Gospels are witness to a way of speaking that had been dying out rather than being formulated. Although research into this possibility runs counter to most contemporary critical approaches to the Gospels, it certainly is historically credible in principle. If one does not in every instance hold to the theory of Markan priority, the evidence might be seen as even stronger in this regard.

Chrys Caragounis and Seyoon Kim are among recent scholars who have

---

somewhat in conflict with his apparent acceptance of the suggestion (p. 603) "that the Son of Man christology appeared relatively late in the exegetical tradition of the early church."

20. J. Jeremias, "Die älteste Schichte der Menschensohn-Logien," *ZNW* 58 (1967) 159–72.

21. Borsch, *The Christian and Gnostic Son of Man* (SBT 2nd series 14; London, 1970), pp. 1–28.

argued for the authenticity of a large number of the Son of Man sayings.[23] They obviously believe that others have been too quick to dismiss the understanding that there was a known conception of a Son of Man in Judaism at the time of Jesus. The Similitudes of Enoch, 4 Ezra 13, other later Jewish materials,[24] and the various strands in the Gospels themselves[25] (perhaps along with Rev 1:13, 14:14) are sufficient evidence, they argue, not necessarily for a definitive titular figure, but for a powerful symbolic image.[26] This likely derives from, or is at least closely allied to Dan 7:13–14, and has affected several Jewish groups of the time in somewhat different ways.

Some twenty years ago I was similarly impressed by indications that some form of Son of Man ideology had strongly influenced the most formative stages of the Gospel traditions. I did not find, however, that the sufficient cause of this flowed from the Danielic symbolic figure. That seemed only a part of the traditions. If the variegated conception that is found in the Gospels is not largely a later creation by the churches, then one might surmise that the initial impetus was itself more complex. Moreover, there were other materials in the Gospels which had never seemed to me to be satisfactorily explained as creations by the later churches in their entirety. I looked particularly at the baptism, temptation, and transfiguration narratives which seemed to bear elements not fully understood by their church users.[27]

Looking for a fresh approach, I suggested that the setting-in-life for several of these strands of tradition was a baptizing sectarianism in the Palestine of Jesus' time. I was particularly intrigued by signs that somewhat later forms of this sectarianism spoke of the Son of Man, along with the possibility that aspects of this sectarian belief (but not practice) were preserved in gnostic traditions. While use of the Son of Man designation practically disappears among other Christians, it is found in use by over a dozen gnostic and Christian gnostic-influenced groups.[28] A common concern in important strands of the baptizing sectarianism and of later gnostic materials was an interest in Adamic lore—associated with a more general conception with a long and varied history, of the first man as a royal figure.[29]

22. Higgins, *Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus*, p. 116.

23. C. C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (WUNT 38; Tübingen, 1986) and Kim, *"Son of Man as the Son of God."*

24. For a review and analysis of these materials with bibliographies, see Caragounis, *Son of Man*, pp. 35–144.

25. Colpe, *TWNT*, vol. 8, pp. 429–61 deals with the synoptic sayings as a fourth source for the Son of Man conception.

26. It is interesting that Perrin became willing to speak of the Son of Man figure as "an ancestral symbol" capable of exerting evocative power, *Modern Pilgrimage*, pp. 36–40.

27. See *SMMH*, esp. pp. 365–89.

28. See Borsch, *Christian and Gnostic Son of Man*, pp. 58–129.

29. A number of scholars would agree with R. Kearns that the Son of Man conception in Daniel 7 goes back to Canaanite lore, but without necessarily accepting his derivation of בר נשא

It was and is novel to consider the possibility that Jesus may have been allied with a cultic practice—of which most of the clear indications would have died out by the time the Gospel traditions were given shape. Such an idea is probably not at first congenial to many Christians and does not fit easily with the dominant picture of the historical Jesus that critical scholarship has delineated nor with its theories of development. Worse for the case is the fact that our knowledge of the baptizing sectarian movements is sketchy and usually secondary. But that, of course, is also the case with much of our first-century evidence, and it was within this sectarian setting that I attempted to understand many aspects of the Son of Man traditions and what I held to be allied materials. I was particularly interested in showing how the apparently disjunctive conception of an earthly but heavenly Son of Man—one who suffered and was vindicated—could have a life-setting in relation to ritual practice.

By analogy with the hard sciences, one might wish that there were new experiments that could be devised—perhaps even new evidence that could be uncovered—which would lead to some more certain and agreed solutions to the Son of Man problem and overcome this embarrassment for New Testament scholarship. It is not inconceivable, however, that the problem will remain, with the evidence continuing to yield only several possible if conflicting scenarios. Recent studies have asked whether the problem is insoluble,[30] and other reviews of the issue have been silent or very tentative about suggesting ways forward.[31]

Yet clearly there are avenues which need to be given further study. Here are but a few of them which should be followed.

1. Sociological investigations are certainly worth pursuing. This, of course, begs the question as to which sociological context is to be used as a setting for particular Son of Man sayings—early or late, pre-resurrection or post-resurrection, in Palestine or the diaspora, country or city, along with other possibilities and combinations of them. But there is no reason that several hypotheses cannot be tried, recognizing, too, that the problem may

---

from an ancient, honorific title for Baal or Hadad. See his three-volume *Vorfragen zur Christologie: I. Morphologische und Semasiologische Studie zur Vorgeschichte eines christologischen Hoheitstitels* (1978); II. *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche und Receptionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Vorgeschichte eines christologischen Hoheitstitels* (1980); III. *Religionsgeschichtliche und Traditionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Vorgeschichte eines christologishen Hoheitstitels* (1982) (Tübingen); and his study of the later use, *Das Traditionsgefüge um den Menschensohn: Ursprünglicher Gehalt und älteste Veränderung im Urchristentum* (Tübingen, 1986).

30. So A. J. B. Higgins, "Is the Son of Man Problem Insoluble?" in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honor of Matthew Black*, ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (Edinburgh, 1969), pp. 70–87; M. Hooker, "Is the Son of Man Problem Really Insoluble?" in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black*, ed. E. Best and R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 155–68.

31. J. R. Donahue offers several suggestions in "Recent Studies on the Origin of 'Son of Man' in the Gospels," *CBQ* 48 (1986) 484–98.

be compounded by the use of some of the sayings in several settings before they were finally incorporated into Gospels.

Do Son of Man sayings and related materials come from the poor or the relatively well-off, or some group escaping poverty or one being forced into it? Are the communities franchised or disenfranchised? Settled or wandering? Dominant or persecuted? Gerd Theissen has made a useful beginning in this regard. He finds that "many sayings about the attitude of members of the Jesus movement display an unmistakable parallelism to sayings about the Son of Man."[32] There is "a structural homologue between the wandering charismatics and the local communities on the one hand and that of the Son of Man on the other."[33] Both are said to have the experience of being outsiders—because of being persecuted but also, in a more positive sense, by transcending the norms of their environment. Theissen concludes that "all these parallels between sayings about the Son of Man and early Christian wandering charismatics (and community members) cannot be coincidence. Evidently the images of the Son of Man Christology had a significant social function."[34]

2. It would be helpful better to understand the baptizing sectarianism of Palestine at the time of Jesus in sociological and other terms. It is conceivable that later tradition tied Jesus more closely to John the Baptist than was actually the case, but there is good evidence in the narratives and sayings, as well as in geographical and sociological terms, indicating that the Jesus movement was born in relationship to baptizing sectarianism. Are references to the Son of Man in some of the surviving sectarian traditions only the result of Christian influence, or do they betray some parallel ideology?[35] Do references to humiliation and exaltation in cultic baptismal life have any relationship to the scenario about the Son of Man? What connections may there be with an interest in Adam among the sectarians and among later gnostics—Adam as the first man, as a kind of representative humanity, as the one who stood closest to the creation and the secrets of God?[36] What is the significance in this regard of the importance of Seth (son of Adam, son of the first man) to much gnostic thought?[37] Is the second article in the Greek phrase ὁ υἱός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου quite as innocent of significance as is usually assumed?

32. G. Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1978), p. 25.
33. Theissen, *Sociology*, p. 26.
34. Ibid., p. 27.
35. See Borsch, *SMMH*, pp. 174–231.
36. See Borsch, *The Christian and Gnostic Son of Man*, pp. 58–121, with reference to the important Apocalypse of Adam and other works. The background of the "Odes of Solomon" also needs much further investigation in this regard. See Borsch, *SMMH*, pp. 188–99, and J. H. Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon* (Oxford, 1973) and in *OTP*, vol. 2, pp. 725–71.
37. See *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut, March 28–31, 1978*; vol. 2 *Sethian Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton (Sup. *Numen* 41.2; Leiden, 1981); and A. F. J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* (Sup. *NovT* 46; Leiden, 1977).

3. Whether reference to the Son of Man in Christian circles was dying out or being formulated in the roughly two decades between Jesus' death and Paul's correspondence, and whether its usage was confined to certain Palestinian areas or not, it would have been remarkable if Paul knew nothing of it. Is it because it is solely a self-reference of Jesus in the tradition that he makes no mention of it? Does he not employ it because he is aware that it is barbaric in Greek and loses much of its nuance in translation? Does he then, as some have suggested, translate or transpose it into other language? One thinks especially of the "one man" Adam and "one man" Christ contrast in Rom 5:12–21 and the "first man Adam" and "the last Adam," "the second man," and the "man of dust" with "man of heaven" contrast of 1Cor 15:45–49. Adam is viewed as "a type of the one who was to come" (Rom 5:14).[38] The idea of a man below in some relation to a man above seems to have had a foothold in both baptizing sectarianism in Palestine and later gnostic thought. Is it only the result of Pauline or other Christian influence?

Probably of most importance in this regard is the *hymn* in Phil 2:6–11—usually held to be based on themes that were not originally Christian. The Christ story here, in other words, has been at least partly influenced by a previously extant pattern. On the basis of little or no evidence which can be linked with the dates and locations of early Christian writings, this pattern has been held to be the myth of a descending and then ascending savior figure.[39] There is, however, some evidence for a contemporary Adamic typology and speculation. I and others have argued that the language of Phil 2:6–11 best suits one who is born into circumstances like those of Adam—in "the form (μορφή)[40] of God" and "the likeness of men." But unlike the first Adam, this one does "not count equality with God a thing to be grasped," but rather "empties himself"—is humble and a servant. After humbling comes vindication and exaltation.[41]

Is this pattern of humbling and exaltation in any way related to the humbling and vindication/exaltation of the Son of Man found in several forms in the Gospels' traditions? Can one detect an earlier Aramaic hymn behind

38. On these passages and the conception more generally, see R. Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1966); also Colpe, *TWNT*, vol. 8, pp. 470–72, U. Wilckens, "Christus, der 'letzte Adam,' und der Menschensohn. Theologische überlegungen zum überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Problem der paulinischen Adam-Christus-Antithese," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn: für Anton Vögtle*, ed. R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg (Freiburg, 1975), pp. 387–403, and R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, 1983).

39. E.g., F. W. Beare, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (New York, 1959), p. 75. ". . . probably of Iranian origin."

40. It is argued that there is no reference to the creation story (Gen 1:26–27) here, since μορφή is used instead of εἰκών, but see Borsch, *SMMH*, p. 251, n. 3.

41. Borsch, *SMMH*, pp. 250–56. For a critique of the Adamic interpretation, see C. A. Wanamaker, "Philippians 2:6–11: Son of God or Adamic Christology?" *NTS* 33 (1987) 179–93.

Paul's words?[42] Does the "as [a] man" (ὡς ἄνθρωπος) of vs. 8 have any connection with the "as a son of man" background?

If none of these references has any genuine association with Son of Man themes in the Gospels, the issue remains even more remarkable. Why does Paul make no reference to a designation/description which must have then been playing a significant role in the developing traditions behind the Gospels?

4. There is a growing consensus among those who work most closely with 1 Enoch that the Similitudes are fully Jewish and were probably written before 100 or quite possibly before 70 C.E.[43] But even if this material was composed after the Gospel traditions had been shaped, it is probably evidence for non-Christian reflection on the figure from Dan 7:13–14 that goes back to the time of Jesus. Attempts to minimize its significance on the grounds that "that Son of Man" is not titular in 1 Enoch but is a way of referring to Daniel's hero are not very telling because the designation may well have been used in a more descriptive and nontitular way in earlier Christian settings as well.[44] It is in this sense that whatever the Ethiopic demonstrative is translating and the definite use of the phrase in the Gospels may bear some relation to each other; i.e., they may be making reference to the/that Son of Man-like one.

We may now ask about the sociological background of the Similitudes and how the writing relates to various Christian settings. Is the strong association of the Son of Man with messianic attributes and titles in 1 Enoch 37–71 a formulation of this work or a sign of a more widespread phenomenon?[45] To which strands of New Testament Son of Man sayings (e.g., the Matthean) is the language and imagery of 1 Enoch 37–71 more closely related and what does this tell us about provenance and sources? Some time ago, for example, I pointed out that the three key phrases in Mk 14:62 (which Perrin saw as a result of Christian pesher activity using Dan 7:13; Ps 110:1 and Zech 12:10)[46] are found in the same order (they see—Son of Man—sitting) in 1En 62:5.[47] Is this but a coincidence, the result of the Similitudes or Mark influencing

42. As did E. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2:5–11* (Heidelberg, 1928).

43. In the course of this symposium, J. H. Charlesworth further reinforced this agreement on the thoroughly Jewish character of 1En 37–71 and its dating in first century C.E. Charlesworth pointed to the discussions of the several SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminars on the subject. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (*SNTS* MS54; Cambridge, 1985), pp. 102–10. For more on the contemporary discussion see J. R. Donahue, *CBQ* 48 (1986) 486, n. 8.

44. M. Hooker refers to the designation as a role rather than a title, "Is the Son of Man Problem Really Insoluble?" p. 167.

45. Fitzmyer (*Wandering Aramean*, p. 153) holds that the Son of Man designation has been regarded as messianic only because of its association in 1 Enoch 37–71.

46. See n. 6 above.

47. F. H. Borsch, "Mark xiv.62 and I Enoch lxii.5," *NTS* 14 (1967–68) 565–67.

the other, or is it due to some other factor? Ps 110:1 may be as important to this strand of the Enoch tradition as it is in the New Testament.[48] See also below (p. 144) on the themes of shame, angels, and the role of the Son of Man in the Gospel sayings and in 1 Enoch 37–71. A better understanding of such issues may also help us to determine how Daniel 7 was interpreted in this period and how widespread was its influence.[49]

5. A critical question for Son of Man research pertains to the relationship of synoptic and Johannine traditions.[50] What is, on any explanation, so remarkable about these sets of traditions is that they say many of the same things about the Son of Man in quite distinctive language. In both we hear of a Son of Man who is an earthly and a heavenly figure. In both he is pictured as a judge (so Jn 5:27). Most remarkable in both traditions is the manner in which the passion and vindication predictions are made of the Son of Man—John accomplishing this in terms of his *double entendre* about the "lifting up" (on the cross and in exaltation) of the Son of Man (Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:34) and the Son of Man's being "glorified" (Jn 12:23–25; 13:31) through passion to exaltation.

In both the synoptic and Johannine Gospels this is what must (δεῖ) happen—probably implying a sense of scriptural warrant and perhaps eschatological *mustness*. There is no question but that the Fourth Evangelist and his community have put all the traditions he inherited through the wringer of their worldview and Christology. This accounts for much of the distinctive character of his Son of Man logia. But how does one account for these striking parallels?[51]

If on other grounds one holds that John knew one or more of the synoptics by reading or hearing them, or that he was acquainted with earlier aspects of synoptic traditions about the Son of Man when they were fairly well formed, this parallelism is remarkable but explicable and not necessarily important in accounting for earlier ideas about the Son of Man. If, however, one holds that the synoptic and Johannine strands separated at a fairly early stage, then it would seem that there were factors in the early tradition which caused

48. On Ps 110:1 in 1 Enoch 37–41 see Johannes Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter Untersuchungen zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Ort der Bilderreden des äthiopischen Henoch* (SUNT 12; Göttingen, 1975), pp. 94–98. In the NT see D. M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville, 1973).

49. On the various theories of how Daniel intended the Son of Man to be perceived, see Caragounis, *Son of Man*, pp. 35–81.

50. See F. J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (Rome, 1976) and for further bibliography, both favoring and questioning a Johannine dependency on the synoptics in this regard, see R. Maddox, "The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John" in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. R. Banks (Grand Rapids, 1974), pp. 186–204.

51. M. Black asks whether the Johannine "the Son of Man must be lifted up" may not be the more primitive and even authentic form parallel to the synoptic passion and resurrection sayings. "The Son of Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate," *BJRL* 45 (1962–63) 305–18. See p. 317.

both strands to tell of a Son of Man judge, somehow both earthly and heavenly, of whom (not of the Son of God, Lord, or Christ!) passion and vindication with exaltation are predicated.[52]

6. On a somewhat broader scale one might describe a persecution-vindication or rejection-exaltation pattern with respect to the Son of Man in the several traditions. This is presented in terms of the Johannine "lifting up" sayings and at several points in the synoptic tradition in addition to the passion predictions. As we have seen, Theissen draws the parallel between the experience of the Son of Man and that of the disciples. The more important passages in this regard are Mt 12:32, par. Lk 12:10; Mt 19:28, 25:31–46; Lk 6:22; 21:36. Are there any links between this scheme and that of the persecution-vindication pattern in Daniel 7 with reference to "one like a Son of Man" (perhaps to be viewed as a representative or corporal figure) and "the saints of the most high"?[53]

7. In a number of studies dealing with the Son of Man, Lk 12:8–9 is a pivotal passage even while it is handled very differently.[54] Tödt viewed it as coming from Jesus and argued for its importance for an understanding of the basis of the Son of Man tradition. The passage, he held, is soteriological rather than christological in character and views the heavenly Son of Man, who is other than Jesus, as a guarantor (more than a judge) of the vindication of the followers of Jesus. The Son of Man becomes "I" in Mt 12:32 (and perhaps in Rev 3:5b as well; "he" in 2Tim 2:12b) because the churches found it difficult to speak of the Son of Man as though another than Jesus.[55]

Lindars, on the other hand, finds the logion of special interest because, together with Mt 12:32–33 and Mk 8:38, par. Lk 9:26, it represents a tradi-

52. Further on the Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel, see Borsch, *SMMH*, pp. 257–313. S. Schulz held that the Son of Man sayings and related materials in John's Gospel derived from a special stratum in the tradition having to do with the eschatological Son of Man. *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium; zugleich ein Beitrag zur Methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums* (Göttingen, 1957).

53. See Cargounis, *Son of Man*, who argues throughout his book for a close and detailed relationship between the Gospels' Son of Man and the Book of Daniel. He believes that Jesus' view of the Son of Man and kingdom of God are both Danielic in origin.

54. In his seminal essay arguing that Jesus never used the Son of Man designation, P. Vielhauer held that the argument for some degree of authenticity regarding Jesus' use of the phrase hung or fell on Lk 12:8–9. Maintaining that the apparent distinction between Jesus and the Son of Man was the result of the legal function of the church's use of the logion, Vielhauer held that this and all of the Son of Man sayings were church creations. See his "Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu," in *Festschrift für Gunther Dehn*, ed. W. Schneemelcher (Neukirchen, 1957), pp. 51–79, and "Jesus und der Menschensohn: zur Diskussion mit Heinz Eduard Tödt und Eduard Schweizer," *ZTK* 60 (1963) 133–37. Both essays collected in *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (Munich, 1965), pp. 55–91, 92–140. Lk 12:8–9, in other words, is not distinguishing between Jesus and another, but between the status of Jesus in this age and the Age to Come. See Von Gösta Lindeskog, "Das Rätsel des Menschensohnes," *ST* 22 (1968) 149–75.

55. Tödt, *Son of Man*, pp. 55–60, and, in debate with Vielhauer regarding the saying's authenticity, pp. 339–47.

tion which bifurcated at an early stage. The variation between Son of Man and I, and between sayings with Son of Man (Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26) and without (Lk 12:9), are signs of the בר (א)נש(א) idiom being differently understood and used in translation.[56] The basic logion underlying the several versions is authentic, but Jesus was referring discretely to himself by use of the idiom.

Thus both scholars see the saying as early and formative. Both of them argue for a more primitive form of Lk 12:8–9 which included "Son of Man" in some form in both halves. Otherwise they vary in just about every important understanding.

From differing perspectives agreement might be reached on an early saying which read something like this:

> Everyone who acknowledges me before men (sons of men?) בר (א)נש(א) will also acknowledge before the angels of God; everyone who is ashamed of me before men (sons of men?) בר (א)נש(א) will be ashamed of before the angels of God.

I frankly find it difficult to hear a speaker referring to himself by different means in the same sentence. (Why not use בר (א)נש(א) all around? It could even be substituted for "everyone.") And if one substitutes "a man like me" or "a man in my position" for בר (א)נש(א), the saying does not seem to make good sense. The matter is complicated by Luke's linking of 12:10, another saying in which בר (א)נש(א) may well have been used, but which Marcan tradition seems to have interpreted as "sons of men."

One may notice, too, that the motifs of "shame" and angels at the judgment, along with the picture of the Son of Man as a vindicator of followers, have important roles in 1 Enoch (particularly 61:10; 62:9–12; 63:11: "their faces will be filled with shame before that Son of Man"). Do these parallels not also suggest that the בר (א)נש(א) here is more than an ordinary mortal?

Lk 12:8–9 is a critical passage for anyone trying to understand the Gospels' Son of Man, but there are many others and, evidently, more questions than answers all around. It is clear that there is no consensus solution to the Son of Man problem on the immediate horizon, though one recognizes why it would be convenient to embrace a solution or to try to minimize the issue. But still it stands—a very large rock in the stream of New Testament research—troubling but also making the flow more interesting.

56. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man*, pp. 48–58.