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Jesus and Apocalypticism

in the previous chapter we described Jesus' self-understanding as prophetic but chose not to describe it as either messianic or non-messianic. If messianism does not aptly describe the eschatology and consciousness of Jesus, perhaps apocalypticism does. In some ways, of course, apocalypticism did make itself felt in the life and thought of Jesus. Yet Edward Schillebeeckx's Jesus study explicitly rejected situating Jesus within Jewish apocalypticism. ¹

We first encounter Jesus' public life and ministry in connection with John's ministry and baptism. Schillebeeckx notes that the motifs associated with John in the New Testament are early prophetic ones and not later apocalyptic ones. The three key words used to describe John's proclamation, the axe and winnow and fire, belong to prophecy and not apocalyptic literature. ² Of the three images within prophecy for God's impending judgment - the burning of chaff after the harvest, a fire in which the withered and barren trees will be consumed, a metal furnace - John used the first two. ³ Nor do we find the apocalyptic doctrine of the

¹Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 119-54.

²*Ibid.*, 128. See Am 8:2; Is 30:24; 40:3-5; 41:15-16; Jer 15:7; 51:33; Mi 4:12-14; Joel 3:13.

³*Ibid.*, 129, and notes 34-37, p. 682. The image of burning chaff - Is 5:24; 10:17; 47:14; Nahum 1:10; Ob 18; Mal 3:19. The conflagration of withered and barren

two ages in John. Rather he preaches repentance and baptism. Schillebeeckx writes, "John the Baptist then is a non-messianic figure, no Zealot either, and a-political in his immediate message; he stands outside Zealotism, outside messianism, and outside apocalypticism."

Jesus heard John preach, perhaps even followed John for a while. He identified himself with John, accepted John's baptism, may have even seen himself in the beginning as a prophet like John. It is more accurate to describe Jesus as akin to the prophets of old rather than to the latter-day visionaries. It is more the Book of Isaiah than that of Enoch which helps us to understand Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is portrayed as inaugurating his preaching mission by reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Lk 4:16-21). The Book of Isaiah is quoted more often in the New Testament than any other book from the Hebrew Scriptures with the exception of the Psalms.⁵ Jesus indeed was more akin to the prophets of old, preaching faith and justice, and in this was essentially and radically conservative, as prophets were: going back to their roots in the Yahwistic faith and choosing to live according to the covenant.

The apocalyptic visionaries legitimated their messages by appeal through pseudonyms to ancient figures. Jesus legitimated his message by appealing to his own authority which came directly from the Father. The apocalyptic perspective was dualist in its teaching on the two ages and pessimistic in its assessment of the present and earthly age. Jesus was a prophet of hope with a concern for the here and now. Apocalyptic attempts to interpret the coming of a new age

trees - *Is* 10:18-19; *Jer* 21:14; 22:7; *Ex* 21:2-23; *Zec* 11:1-2. The refining fire in the furnace - *Is* 1:24-25. For references to John see *Mk* 1:4; *Mt* 3:2, 8; *Acts* 13:24; 19:4.

⁴*Ibid.*, 135.

⁵Whether one considers the New Testament as a whole, or simply the four Gospels, or only the Synoptics, the most frequently quoted source is Psalms, then Isaiah, then Deuteronomy. See *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, ed. Robert G. Bratcher, revised edition (New York: United Bible Societies, 1961).

were based on a deterministic view of history. Jesus preached that no one, including himself, knew the day or the hour. God's coming reign, which is not the apocalyptic aeon, will come when least expected. Jesus did not communicate his dreams as visions; he spoke God's word.

A major aspect of Jesus life and message simply involved this present era and this earth. Although he looked toward the coming reign of God, which was already dawning, he was not other-worldly, supra-terrestrial. His radical social consciousness, a part of every prophet's consciousness, was existential living in the present. Jesus was not a dualist grounded in an either/ or antagonism between this era and the age to come. He believed in *both* heaven *and* earth. He lived in both worlds, as prophets of old had done, the world of God and the world of humankind. He may have envisioned a new age but a new age did not necessarily mean the end of the earth as we know it.

We cannot help at this point but be open to the suggestion of Bruce Chilton.

The term "apocalyptic," as applied to Jesus' preaching, is practically evacuated of content. On purely logical grounds, the propriety of its continued usage in this connexion is seriously to be questioned.⁶

Jesus starkly repudiated the faithless (diabolical?) seeking after signs, and in doing so repudiated an association between his message and that of the apocalypticists.⁷

⁶Bruce Chilton, "Regnum Dei Deus Est," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31 (1978), 261.

⁷See Robert Jewett, *Jesus Against the Rapture. Seven Unexpected Prophecies* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979). Also Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 201-27.

The Human One
The Son of Humanity

In assessing the influence of apocalypticism on Jesus, the most challenging task is to determine what Jesus meant when he referred to "the human one" or "the son of humanity" (the "son of man").⁸ In contrast to the very few references in which Jesus concerns himself with the question of the Messiah, there are over sixty texts in the Synoptics alone in which Jesus speaks of "the son of humanity."⁹ In these Synoptic texts, the expression is almost always found in the sayings of Jesus, not spoken by others in reference to Jesus. Jesus' use of the expression did not alarm or arouse the curiosity of his listeners. They were far less bewildered by it than we are, for whom it has become one of the most difficult issues in New Testament interpretation.

The Greek expression used in the gospels (*ho huios tou anthropou*) is a translation of an Aramaic original (*bar*

⁸How best to translate *ho huios tou anthropou*, given its varied shades of meaning and the fact that it is itself a translation of an Aramaic original, is a difficult question. "Son of man" will no longer do. Literally it is best rendered as "the son of a human being," but this is awkward in English. Its basic meaning is a human being, or the human being. Hence, in reference to Dan 7, C.F.D. Moule speaks of "the Human One" (*The Phenomenon of the New Testament* [Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1967], 89). F.W. Danker suggests "Son of Humanity" as a translation, which also seems acceptable (*Interpretation* 37 [1983], 298).

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'*enasha*). ¹⁰What did Jesus mean when he referred to "the human one" or "the son of humanity?" Did Jesus' usage reflect on apocalyptic influence or did it simply reflect a common, idiomatic, Aramaic way of speaking? Opinions with respect to the interpretation of this expression must remain open to revision for some time to come. Yet there are conclusions which we can legitimately suggest as well.

Judaism Before Christianity

According to a widely held opinion, there existed in pre-Christian Judaism at the time of Jesus a fairly defined eschatological expectation associated with a supra-terrestrial figure, an apocalyptic "Son of Humanity," and that "Son of Humanity" functioned as a quasi-messianic title for a figure other than the political Davidic Messiah. Although this is a respected opinion, it is a highly questionable one. We cannot assume that such a concept or title existed at the time of Jesus.

Three texts have had major significance in affirming the existence of this concept in pre-Christian Judaism: Daniel 7, 4 Ezra 13, and the Similitudes of Enoch. Of these three, 4 Ezra provides no basis for the existence of this concept in pre-Christian Judaism simply due to its late date, the second century C.E. ¹¹ If other sources provide a basis for the exist-

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tence of such a conception,⁴ Ezra may be of help in filling the concept out, but one cannot argue from it to the existence of the concept in pre-Christian Judaism.

Some have maintained that the apocalyptic concept or title has its basis in Daniel 7:13, which is pre-Christian (second century B.C.E.). The figure in Daniel 7:13, however, is either a symbolic reference to the saints of the Most High, the loyal Jews, and not an actually existent individual,¹² or perhaps a reference to an angel, an angelic leader and heavenly counterpart of the loyal Jews.¹³ According to the interpretation that the heavenly but human figure in

Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). A new edition of this literature is now available, James H. Charlesworth, ed., 2 vols. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983). Helpful aids in approaching this literature include John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, an Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Martin McNamara, *Intertestamental Literature*, Old Testament Message, vol. 23 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983); George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); Bruce Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957).

One of the canonical books of the Old Testament is that of Ezra (1 Ezra). There is an apocryphal book called the Book of Esdras (or sometimes 1 Esdras and even at times 3 Ezra). Esdras is a Greek form of Ezra. The biblical book of Ezra is considered 1 Ezra; the biblical book of Nehemiah is 2 Ezra; and the apocryphal Esdras is 3 Ezra. The book of our present concern is either labeled as 4 Ezra or 2 Esdras. The original chapters of the book, 3-14, the Jewish apocalypse, are dated c. 100 C. E. by Nickelsburg, 187-88. For the fact that 2 Esdras/4 Ezra cannot be used as a basis for a pre-Christian Jewish "Son of Humanity" concept, see both Maurice Casey, *Son of Man*, 122-29; and A.J.B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 12.

¹²See the translation of Hartmann and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 23 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), 202-4.

See Maurice Casey, *Son of Man*, 7-50, for his interpretation of Daniel 7; pp. 24-40 for his interpretation of the human figure as a symbol for Israel. Also, Hartmann and Di Lella, 85-102, 202-20; and p. 97, n. 234, for other commentators who agree with this interpretation. Also J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making, A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 68-75.

¹³John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 81-85, develops the main alternative to the corporate, symbolic interpretation, namely, that the Danielic figure is the angelic leader of the heavenly host, most probably Michael. The angelic interpretation does not exclude the fact that the text also implies reference to the persecuted Jews. Nor does the angelic interpretation imply that "son of humanity" was a title in pre-Christian Judaism.

Daniel 7 is a corporate symbol, the "one in human likeness" (7:13) is symbolic of "the holy ones of the Most High" (7:18). The four beasts (7:3-7) are not actually existing animals but symbolic of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians and Greeks, all conquerors of Palestine.¹⁴ Likewise the human figure is symbolic for the holy ones of God, the faithful ones who resisted Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The "one in human likeness" of Daniel 7 cannot be interpreted as a quasi-messianic title for an individual and ought not be translated as an apocalyptic "Son of Humanity."

The four pagan kingdoms are represented by four monsters or beasts; the kingdom of the holy ones is represented by a member of the *human* race. In the vision, the "one in human likeness" is given kingship (7:14); in the interpretation it is the holy ones of the Most High who are given dominion (7:18). The one in human likeness comes with the clouds of heaven as a contrast to the beasts who came up out of the ocean. He did not descend from God as an angel might, but rather ascended to God and was brought into his presence. Thus the "son of humanity" in Daniel 7:13 is not to be interpreted as a messianic title.

The real question is whether Daniel 7:13 came to be understood or interpreted differently as times changed and apocalypses and apocalypticism developed. Maurice Casey surveyed the history of the interpretation of Daniel 7 and suggests two traditions of interpretation.¹⁵ One tradition retained the original corporate interpretation of Daniel 7 as the faithful Jews. A second tradition of interpretation was characterized by its re-interpretation of the text, adapting it to current historical situations. In this exegesis the fourth kingdom was no longer Seleucid but became the Roman Empire, and the four kingdoms became Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome rather than the original interpre-

¹⁴Cf. Maurice Casey, *Son Of Man*, 18-22, Hartmann and Di Lella, 211-17; H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book Of Daniel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, [1935] 1964).

¹⁵For "the Syrian tradition," see chapter three of Casey, *Son Of Man*, 51-70, esp. 69-70. For "the Western tradition," see chapter four of Casey, 71-98.

tation of Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. Christian interpreters in this tradition of interpretation understood the little horn to be the Antichrist rather than Antiochus Epiphanes and the little horn or Antichrist would be destroyed at the last judgment with the second coming of Christ.

The important question is whether the human figure, which was symbolic in Daniel 7 (or perhaps angelic), became re-interpreted (in accord with the second tradition of interpretation) as a real messianic individual, namely, the so-called apocalyptic "Son of Humanity." If there existed such a concept, it is not found within the original understanding of the author of Daniel nor the tradition which preserved that original understanding. It could have developed in the pre-Christian period in accord with the type of exegesis that led to re-interpretation. This, however, brings us to the Book of Enoch.

To maintain the existence of the "Son of Humanity" as an apocalyptic, quasi-messianic title on the basis of Enoch has serious difficulties. Chapters 37-71, the Similitudes of Enoch, have two problems. The first is whether there is in the Similitudes anything like the "Son of Humanity" used in a messianic, titular sense.¹⁶ The second is that of dating. The absence of this section of 1 Enoch from the Qumran materials has led to a well argued post-Christian date for the

¹⁶There are both a First Enoch and a Second Enoch. 1 Enoch is sometimes known as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch since we only have the entire collection of material in the Ethiopic translation. Chapters 37-71 of 1 Enoch appear to have been originally a separate work and are called "The Parables of Enoch." See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 46-55, 90-94, 145-51, 214-23.

See Maurice Casey, *Son Of Man*, pp. 35; 90, 92, 112, 125-26, 128-29, 135-39, for his repeated conviction that there was no "son of humanity" concept or title in Judaism. Casey argues that "son of humanity" in Enoch is not a title, but simply the ordinary expression for a human being, 99-112. Also see Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 173-76. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 215, writes in reference to the Similitudes: "'Son of Man' is not a title. It is a Semitic way of saying 'man,' and it is almost always qualified."

Casey argues that the expression in 1 Enoch refers to Enoch. However, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 147-54, in keeping with his interpretation of Daniel 7, argues that the "son of man" in the Similitudes is not Enoch but a heavenly, angelic representative.

Similitudes (which is not the same as maintaining that they are of Christian origin). Evidence suggests the possibility of a post-Christian Jewish document.¹⁷ With such questions raised about the Similitudes of Enoch, the basis for a pre-Christian apocalyptic messiah is seriously weakened.

Maurice Casey accepts that the "son of humanity" in the Similitudes is no longer symbolic for a corporate group but rather refers to an individual; yet the expression is still not an apocalyptic, messianic title. The person referred to is Enoch, who was pre-existent, was born and lived on earth,

[17]The dating of the Similitudes has been much disputed since J.T. Milik, ed., *The Books of Enoch, Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), who dated the Similitudes c. 270 C.E. (p. 96). This is in sharp contrast to the date given by R.H. Charles who dated them in the first century B.C.E., *The Book of Enoch* (London: SPCK, [1912] 1947), xiv.

Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 221-23, argues that the Similitudes are a Jewish writing produced around the turn of the era or the beginning of the Common Era; also *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978), 411-19.

Among those inclined toward a pre-Christian date is J.A. Fitzmyer, "Implications of the New Enoch Literature from Qumran," *Theological Studies* 38 (1977), 332-45.

Among those against a pre-Christian date for the Similitudes are J. Barr, "Messiah," *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, 651; J.C. Hindley, "Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch, An Historical Approach," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967-68), 551-65; M.A. Knibb, "The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1978-79), 345-59; G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 175-76. J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 75-78, suggests a post-70 C.E. date.

John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 143 and 241, suggests the early or mid-first century C.E.

Many recognize that the lack of certainty over the date presents a problem. Fuller recognizes that there is legitimate uncertainty about a pre-Christian date, and yet maintains that the Similitudes can still be used as evidence for a pre-Christian Jewish tradition, *Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 37f. On the other hand, C.F.D. Moule and M. Black would maintain that the uncertain date weakens the theory of a pre-Christian Jewish "son of humanity" concept. C.F.D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (Naperville, Ill.: A.R. Allenson, 1967), 34, n. 21. M. Black, "The Son of the Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 45 (1962-73), 305-318, esp. 312.

Casey, *Son of Man*, 99, is open with respect to the date but argues against a titular use within the Similitudes. Thus the date is not crucial for him (p. 137).

A summary of some recent discussion can be found in "The SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminars at Tubingen and Paris on the Books of Enoch," *New Testament Studies* 25 (1978-79), 315-23.

did not die but was taken up to heaven, would reappear at the end as eschatological judge, and would vindicate his followers and condemn their oppressors. Genesis 5:21-24 provided the basis for speculation concerning Enoch which later gave rise to the Enoch literature. "Son of humanity" in the Similitudes is a word for an individual but refers to Enoch, not an apocalyptic, messianic expectation.

There was an influence of Daniel 7:13 on the Similitudes, but there is no messianic or titular concept in Enoch because of that influence. The author of the Similitudes followed the tradition of interpretation open to re-interpretation and applied the Danielic prophecy of the human figure to his own hero Enoch. He chose the particular expression for his hero because he was influenced by Daniel 7, but there is no evidence in the Similitudes of the expression being a title for an apocalyptic messianic figure.

James D.G. Dunn comes to conclusions fairly similar to those of Maurice Casey.¹⁸ For Dunn, the Danielic use of "one like a son of man" is a symbolic representation of Israel. Nor is there evidence in later pre-Christian Judaism of such a concept as that of an apocalyptic, messianic figure. Dunn attaches more importance to the date of Enoch than does Casey, however.

The view that there existed in pre-Christian Judaism such an eschatological, apocalyptic figure has been the opinion of Fuller,¹⁹ Hahn,²⁰ Todt,²¹ and others.²² With different

¹⁸James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 65-97, esp. 95-97.

¹⁹Fuller, *Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 34-43.

²⁰Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology, Their History in Early Christianity*, trans. Harold Knight and George Ogg (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969), 15-53. According to Hahn, in pre-Christian Judaism a titular use had established itself. This use was adopted by Jesus and by the primitive Christian community (20). Nevertheless, many of the "son of humanity" sayings are still secondary, and the question remains which sayings are the oldest and thus to be included in the preaching of Jesus (21). There are three groups of sayings: those which refer to the future eschatological function of judge; those which refer to the suffering, dying, and rising; and those which refer to an earthly, present activity or function. The prophecies of suffering and death, at least in their present form, arose within the Christian community, are not traceable to the preaching of Jesus himself, and are probably the latest development of the three groups (21). The question then is whether the more original sayings, those in fact traceable to Jesus,

nuances, such as has been the opinion of Borsch²³ and Higgins.²⁴ In opposition to this perspective, maintaining that no such concept existed, we have Borg,²⁵ Casey,²⁶ Dunn,²⁷ Lindars,²⁸ and Vermes,²⁹ as well as Collins,³⁰ Dodd,³¹ Leivestad,³² and Perrin,³³ again with varied nuances. We

are the present ones or the future ones (21). Hahn accepts the priority of the eschatological, future sayings (24). These go back to Jesus himself. The "son of humanity" in these sayings, however, is not to be identified with Jesus. The "I" of the speaker in these sayings is clearly distinguished from the "son of humanity" (22). E.g., in Luke 12:8f., which is genuinely a saying of Jesus, a differentiation between Jesus and the coming "son of humanity" is made (33-34). The sayings about the earthly deeds in their present form cannot be original words of Jesus (37). Thus the process of development was: Jesus referred to the future coming of an eschatological "son of humanity" in its titular, apocalyptic sense, but someone other than himself. The early Christian community identified this coming one with Jesus. Next, the Jesus who worked on earth in power and authority was also described as the "son of humanity." Lastly, this description was extended to cover statements about his suffering and rising (28).

‡H.E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. Dorothea Barton (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965). Tödt's research into the "son of humanity" sayings has been especially respected. I summarize some of his suppositions and conclusions and include my own observations within parentheses.

"Before the concept of the Son of Man appeared within the synoptic tradition, it had already existed in Jewish apocalyptic thinking. Literary evidence for this can be found in Dan 7:13f.; 4 Ezra 13; and I Enoch. There can be no doubt that there was a relationship between the apocalyptic concept of the Son of Man and the synoptic sayings" (222). (This is a starting point for Tödt, not something he really attempts to prove. And yet it is a point of great controversy. It is a prominent opinion, especially in German scholarship, but must be considered unproven.)

"The Son of Man concept has commonly been treated as a constant entity possessing the same meaning throughout the synoptic tradition It will not suffice to pay attention to the way in which Jesus modified the Son of man concept in his teaching . . . one shall have to examine whether the post-Easter tradition continued to develop the Son of Man concept productively" (33). (This is one of the most constructive aspects of Tödt's research. Although I do not accept his starting point, and thus his conclusions with respect to Jesus' use, we must recognize that the sayings as we have them are not only a question of Jesus' use and that of the post-resurrection Christian community, or a question of three classes of sayings which entered the tradition at different points, but rather that the sayings serve different functions in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as redaction criticism would lead us to suppose.) See pp. 92-94 for Tödt's summary of Matthew's usage and 108-12 for his summary of Luke's usage.

"In Jesus' sayings concerning the Son of Man the apocalyptic elaborations are radically cut down At the inlet through which the Son of Man concept was primarily channeled into the synoptic tradition, i.e., in Jesus' teaching, this concept shed the features of apocalyptic elaboration and theology. There is not even an allusion to a pre-existence of the Son of Man. In Jesus' teaching all importance is

should also place Schweizer here.³⁴ Given the highly disputed character of this issue, we cannot assume that the existence of such an apocalyptic figure or title has been proven. I am more inclined to follow the direction set by Vermes, Casey, Dunn, and Lindars.

attached to the fact that God's **reign stands at the door**, that the Son of Man will come" (66). "Jesus' Son of Man sayings differ from the Jewish apocalyptic concept by reason of their soteriological nature" (227). (Although there supposedly is this definite Son of Man conception or title in pre-Christian Judaism, even Todt remarks that Jesus' teaching about the figure is stripped of its many typical, apocalyptic features.)

22E.g., D.E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), esp. 46-47.

²³Frederick Houk Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (London: SCM Press, 1967). Borsch holds to the existence of an apocalyptic "Son of Humanity" concept in Judaism, but comes to this conclusion by a different route. He is also open to authentic sayings of Jesus in all three of the common categories.

Borsch writes, "The mainstream of Judaism . . . had no real place for a suffering messianic figure" (175). However, "we must still search for a setting, some set of circumstances perhaps more esoteric, or, if you will, more on the fringe of what may be called normative Judaism, where the teaching might have taken shape" (176). Borsch comprehensively surveys the "human figure" in many non-Jewish as well as Jewish sources and concludes, "We hold that there are now many good reasons for believing that there were extant during the first century AD and probably for some time earlier a number of Jewish-oriented sects which practiced forms of baptism as an ordination/ coronation rite and which were likely open to at least a measure of foreign (or simply indigenous but non-Jewish) influences" (218). "We believe it quite likely that Jesus could have been influenced by the beliefs of one or more groups like these" (219).

Borsch writes, "We may well have shown that this sectarian milieu was much concerned with the Man in one way or another, but we have not found that the specific expression the Son of Man was used for such a figure in the same particular milieu" (225-26). But this point is a crucial one. He continues, "In one sense we have no answer to this criticism. From the information available to us, we can hardly insist that there did exist a pre-Christian baptizing sect (or **sects**) **which described or styled its Man hero specifically as the Son of Man** and saw him as something more **than a distant heavenly champion . . . Yet is it all that unlikely that** such could have been the case?" (226). This is admitting an insufficient basis for his conclusion. He is saying that, based on his comprehensive research, he cannot document the existence of the hypothetical baptizing sect which he postulates. In other words the evidence does not **necessitate the acceptance** of such a pre-Christian "son of humanity" figure.

Of course, if there were such a sect, should we not look for it in the circle surrounding John the baptizer, simply because of all the baptizing sects this one would more probably have had the greater influence on Jesus? But Borsch writes, "It certainly does not prove that John the Baptist was a leader of the manner of sect which we are proposing, one that combined belief in the royal Man with baptism

Rather than representative of apocalyptic expectation, "son of humanity" in pre-Christian Judaism reflected Aramaic usage. The underlying Aramaic is *bar 'enash* (Hebrew 'adam, *ben adam*, a human being) and *bar 'enasha'* (Hebrew ha'-adam, the human one).³⁵ Geza Vermes,

conceived of as an ordination or exaltation to association with or to the office of this Man" (225). Borsch is aware of this lacuna in his hypothesis.

24A. J.B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge University Press, 1980). Higgins affirms a "son of humanity" figure in Judaism and limits authentic sayings to future sayings. Yet he does this in a novel way.

Higgins writes, "Is it conceivable that Jesus could have used *bar nasha* in an 'apocalyptic' sense in the complete absence of any antecedent?" (53). But is this not the point to be proven: did Jesus use it in an apocalyptic sense? He continues, "Just such an antecedent may be assumed to be behind his employment of it in the glorification sayings" (53). But can we assume such a debatable statement? We have a circle. We assume Jesus used *bar nasha* in an apocalyptic sense. So we then assume that such an apocalyptic antecedent existed in Judaism. So we then have the background needed for Jesus who could have made use of it. Higgins: "It is not the apocalyptic usage that is original to him; what is original is his functional reinterpretation of Son of Man to express what he meant by his destiny as the divine agent in judgment and salvation" (53). Higgins' main contribution is that Jesus neither used the title "Son of Humanity" as a self-designation nor applied it to some figure other than himself. Yet he did use it (36-37). The concept existed. And Jesus used it in a functional way, to refer to his future function or status, not his present activity nor his future personal identity. Jesus used it, but not in a titular sense.

Of the kernel sayings which Higgins attributes to Jesus, he writes, "The absence of all these apocalyptic features from the kernel sayings is surely significant; initially the only item of apocalyptic imagery is the Son of Man himself" (125). But if one removes all the apocalyptic aspects from Jesus' use, why does one continue to assume an apocalyptic "son of humanity" in order to explain Jesus' use? If one removes all the apocalyptic aspects, does one not then have a non-apocalyptic "son of humanity?" But what is this? No longer the "son of humanity" concept. Could the background not just as easily be Jesus' use of *bar enasha'* as an Aramaic idiom?

The major contribution of Higgins is that he wants to interpret Jesus' use of the "son of humanity" as a future reality in a functional way (121). "On the reasonable assumption (still not disproved) of the existence of a son of man concept in Judaism, Jesus was unique in applying to it a completely new and original non-personal, functional interpretation, as a means of expressing, in veiled and often misunderstood language, his beliefs about the eschatological judgment" (124). (The italics are mine. The parentheses are Higgins'.)

An interesting fact about both Borsch and Higgins is that, although one has to place them in line with those who accept a Jewish "son of humanity" concept in the background of Jesus, one could almost as easily put them on the other side. One could as readily conclude from Borsch to the non-existence of such a concept. One could conclude from Higgins that it is an assumption for which we have no need.

²⁵Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 221-27.

Vermes' interpretation placed too much weight on the possibility of *bar 'enash* being exclusively a self-reference. Maurice Casey's interpretation placed greater emphasis on the undisputed generic meaning of the expression, but with the nuance of "anyone, including myself." The expression contains the capacity for self-reference as part of its generic meaning. An even more precise rendering of the expression has been suggested by Barnabas Lindars for whom the idiomatic expression connotes neither an exclusive self-reference nor universal generic usage, but lies between the two: "someone such as I."

Bar 'enash (a human one, a son of humanity) is simply a member of the human species. But *bar 'enasha'* ("the son of humanity" with the definite article, the Aramaic emphatic state) means "son of humanity" in a special sense. This special sense, for Lindars, is not simply a generic use (humankind in general) nor a simple self-reference (whether that be seen as part of the generic use as in Casey or as a distinct use as in Vermes) but a self-inclusion as a part of a group or class: "someone in my position." Thus, according to Lindars, Jesus, in using *bar 'enasha*, was not referring to himself exclusively, yet was doing so intentionally. The Greek translation, as both Casey and Lindars point out, makes the phrase appear to function as an exclusive self-reference, and hence as quasi-titular, but the Aramaic idiom underlying the Greek is not in any sense a messianic title.

³⁶This perspective goes back as far as Julius Wellhausen, however. Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus*, 16, quotes the following text from Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* VI (1900), 194: "In the mouth of Jesus, the expression 'son of man' may have been merely a general expression denoting an individual man; only the primitive community, in connection with its expectation of the parousia, stamped it with titular character."

³⁷See n. 29 in this chapter. The shift is now manifested in the recent Spanish translation of the New Testament, *Nueva Biblia Española*, directed by Luis Alonso Schokel and Juan Mateos (Madrid: Ediciones Cristianidad, 1975, Edición Latinoamericana, 1976). *El Hijo del hombre* has become *el hombre* (in Mk 2:10; 2:28) or *este Hombre* (in most of the Synoptic sayings).

Jesus' Prophetic Usage

Some scholars have maintained that none of the "son of humanity" sayings in the New Testament are the authentic words of Jesus himself (Kasemann, Perrin, Teeple, Vielhauer).³⁸ Even if it were true that none of the sayings *as we have them* are sayings of Jesus himself, this need not imply that Jesus never spoke in this way. It would simply be a question of development within the sayings so that we do not have them in exactly the way Jesus spoke. Our immediate concern is not the authenticity of the sayings but the fact that Jesus used the expression. Any conclusion to the contrary is suspect simply because the evidence is so obvious. More than almost any other expression in the New Testament we find this one on Jesus' lips, and it is Jesus' way of speaking, not the way others speak about him. We find this speech pattern of Jesus over sixty times in the Synoptics alone,³⁹ a sizable number considering the paucity of many other expressions. The evidence thus supports Jesus' use of *bar 'enasha'* in his teaching. It was characteristic of his way of speaking.

There are several ways in which the *bar 'enasha'* sayings have come to be classified. The better known is the threefold classification which goes back to Bultmann and is found in Tödt, Hahn, Fuller and others.⁴⁰ A first group comprises sayings in which "the son of humanity" is present and active

³⁸See E. Kasemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville, Ill.: A.R. Allenson, 1964), 15-47. N. Perrin, "Recent Trends in Research in the Christology of the New Testament," in *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. J.C. Rylaarsdam (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), 217-33; also *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 164-99, 259-60. H.M. Teeple, "The Origin of the Son of Man Christology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84 (1965), 213-50. P. Vielhauer, "Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu," *Festschrift für Gunther Dehn* (Neukirchen, 1957), 51-79, reprinted in *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (Munich, 1965), 55-91. For a summary of several of these opinions, see A.J.B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 36-40.

³⁹See n. 9 in this chapter.

⁴⁰See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 30; Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus*, -95-98.

on earth. A second group are those sayings in which the mission of "the son of humanity" is associated with suffering and death. The third group comprises those sayings which refer to the "the son of humanity" as the one to come in the future. This system of classification is usually but not always associated with an interpretation of "the son of humanity" as an apocalyptic, messianic title.

Those who do not accept a pre-Christian, Jewish *bar 'enasha'* concept of a quasi-messianic figure classify the sayings differently. Vermes has classified the sayings in terms of their relationship to Daniel 7.⁴¹ Casey's classification separates the sayings into (1) those which are authentic examples of correct Aramaic idiom, (2) the passion predictions, (3) those which were produced by the early Church under the influence of Daniel 7, and (4) miscellaneous sayings.⁴²

To indicate the wide diversity of opinion about the authenticity of the sayings we go from those who argue that none of them are authentic (Käsemann, Perrin, Teeple, Vielhauer) to those who argue that the only authentic sayings are among those that refer to the future (Tödt, Hahn, Higgins) to those who maintain that it is the future sayings which are not authentic (Vermes) to those who maintain that there are authentic sayings of Jesus in all three groups (Barrett, Bruce, Marshall, Moule, Schweizer).⁴³

Once we move away from *bar 'enasha'* as an apocalyptic title to recognizing its roots in an Aramaic idiom, progress is possible. Thus, for Casey, those sayings are authentic Jesus material which reflect the underlying Aramaic idiom (his first group). Following this lead, and Barnabas Lindars' interpretation of the underlying Aramaic idiom, Lindars

⁴¹ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 179.

⁴² Casey, *Son of Man*, 236-37.

⁴³ See C.K. Barrett, *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); F.F. Bruce, *This is That* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1968); I.H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-66), 327-51; C.F.D. Moule, *The New Testament Gospels* (London: B.B.C. Publications, 1965), 46-49; and *The Phenomenon of the New Testament*, 34-36; E. Schweizer, "The Son of Man," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960), 119-29, and "The Son of Man Again," *New Testament Studies* 9 (1962-63), 256-61.

identifies nine authentic *bar 'enasha'* sayings.⁴⁴ All are from Q and Mark: (1) Matthew 8:20 // Luke 9:58; (2) Matthew 11:16-19 // Luke 7:31-35; (3) Matthew 12:32 // Luke 12:10; (4) Luke 11:30; (5) Matthew 9:6 // Mark 2:10 and Luke 5:24; (6) Matthew 10:32 // Luke 12:8; and three sayings underlying the passion predictions, (7) "*bar enasha'* may be delivered up" (Mark 9:31); (8) "*bar 'enasha'* goes according to his destiny" (Mark 14:21a); and (9) "*bar 'enasha'* will give his life for many" (Mark 10:45).

Although there may be little agreement on precisely which sayings are authentic Jesus material, it is best to see the *bar °enasha'* sayings in their origins as rooted in the teaching of Jesus. In some of the sayings, there is a basic core which comes from Jesus but gets further elaborated and developed (e.g., the passion predictions). Others are perhaps completely the product of the early Church (e.g., those apocalyptic future sayings directly dependent on Daniel 7). But there are still a number of sayings rooted in the life of Jesus and his particular use of an Aramaic idiom.

We can tentatively suggest a direction of development behind the *bar 'enasha'* sayings. The post-resurrection Christian community preserved Jesus' way of speaking and some of his sayings. However, "the son of humanity" speech pattern was also made to bear more and more the faith and eschatology of the community. The *bar 'enasha'* expression was eschatologized and came to reflect the expectation of Jesus' return. It was apocalypticized into a way of describing the future hope which was attached to Jesus after his resurrection from the dead. Jesus' way of speaking was made to carry a meaning that was part of the early Christian hope and with which the continued interpretation of Daniel 7 was also associated. Thus there were at least two possible levels of meaning behind "the son of humanity" sayings. The primary level of usage by Jesus was in a non-titular, non-messianic, non-apocalyptic sense, which at times may have been an ordinary way of speaking and at times a way of expressing his own authority. The second level was post-

⁴⁴Lindars, *Jesus, Son of Man*, 27-84.

resurrection development in which the expression and sayings carried more and more meaning in the light of Jesus' life, resurrection, and the early Christian hope.

Casey argues that Daniel 7:13 influenced only a few New Testament sayings.⁴⁵ In general, the Gospels' use of "son of humanity" was not derived from Daniel 7. This does not exclude, however, the fact that the Gospel term was so derived in a saying or two, such as in Mark 14:62. But another source or sources lie behind the majority of the occurrences of *bar 'enasha'in* the Gospels. The term was not a messianic title in Judaism. Yet Jesus knew the expression "ever since he was old enough to find human speech intelligible."⁴⁶ He spoke Aramaic, and "son of humanity" was a normal Aramaic expression. Jesus used the expression and his use did not depend upon the influence of Daniel 7. The small group of "son of humanity" sayings in which the influence of Daniel 7 is detectable have their *Sitz im Leben* in the early Church. A group of Christians who had inherited a flexible method of exegesis open to re-interpretation and were in a position similar to the Enoch circle found their expectation of the second coming of Jesus in Daniel 7:13.

The authentic "son of humanity" sayings of Jesus deal with his life on earth, including his death. The majority of inauthentic Synoptic sayings deal with the time of the End, and give Jesus a fundamental role in these last events. It is within this broader framework that the group of sayings influenced by Daniel 7 belong. *Bar 'enasha'* has its *Sitz im Leben* in the life of Jesus, but as a *title* has its *Sitz im Leben* in the work of the early Church.⁴⁷

⁴⁵For Casey's survey of the Gospel material, see *Son of Man*, 157-223. For a summary of his results, see 201-19.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁷James D.G. Dunn (*Christology in the Making*, 65-97) comes to conclusions fairly similar to those of Casey. Jesus used the phrase in a non-titular sense when referring to himself and his mission, and without particular reference to Daniel 7. The interpretation of Daniel 7 as referring to a particular individual can only be traced back to the early Christian movement (or perhaps to Jesus himself for Dunn). In either case, the individualizing exegesis of Daniel 7:13 probably began

Although he approaches Daniel 7 with a different interpretation, John J. Collins supports the thesis that the apocalyptic matrix is the context not for Jesus' use of the *bar 'enasha'* expression but for the early Christian, post-resurrection, New Testament usage.⁴⁸ The belief that Jesus would come again as *bar 'enasha'* presupposes the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus and manifests a development beyond Jesus' own usage. Given faith in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, it was inevitable that he would come to be interpreted within an apocalyptic milieu in light of Daniel 7, which interpretation was then a basis for Jesus' future and imminent second coming as judge.

We can now outline possible stages of development behind the *bar 'enasha'* expression:

A. The usage in Daniel 7 was corporate and symbolic (or perhaps an angelic reference);

B. The usage in pre-Christian Judaism was as an Aramaic way of speaking, an indefinite or a generic use, or a generic use that was inclusive of the self as well;

C. Jesus' usage was along the lines of B above. It was neither an exclusive self-reference, nor simply a universal statement, but a reference to himself and others like himself. It was also able to convey his sense of prophetic authority.

D. The interpretation of the expression within the Synoptic sayings in a quasi-titular and apocalyptic way came after the resurrection and was coupled with an individualizing exegesis of Daniel 7.

as a reference to Jesus and not in a pre-Christian milieu. At least the earliest datable interpretation of Daniel's "son of humanity" as an individual figure is the Christian identification of "son of humanity" with Jesus, whether that originated with Jesus or with the community. Dunn refers to the period between the two Jewish revolts (70-132 C.E.) as a period of intense and escalating speculation regarding "the son of humanity" in Daniel's vision, a period of heightened messianic hope and apocalyptic fervor. This was the setting for 4 Ezra and probably the Similitudes of Enoch. Thus the idea of "the son of humanity" as a pre-existent heavenly figure seems not to have emerged until the last decades of the first century.

48John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 209-210. For Collins' interpretation of Daniel 7 and of "the son the humanity" as an angel, namely Michael, see pp. 78-85.

The suggestion is not to be dismissed that the meaning underlying the *bar enasha'* expression as used by Jesus is the meaning Jesus put into the expression. The expression remains enigmatic to the degree that the one using it remains an enigma. A particular Aramaic idiom becomes one of Jesus' preferred ways of speaking, especially when speaking in a way that includes or refers to himself. Thus the expression will begin to carry the weight of Jesus' own self-understanding. To the degree that Jesus' own self-understanding remains inaccessible, so does the meaning of *bar 'enasha'as* used by Jesus. Thus *bar 'enasha'* will not so much be a key to the consciousness of Jesus as Jesus will be the key to the meaning of *bar 'enasha'*: It does not express an apocalyptic eschatology on Jesus' part; nor does it express necessarily any messianic self-understanding. It does seem to convey Jesus' sense of prophetic authority and destiny. The expression could well have come to have even more meaning as Jesus' own self-understanding grew and developed. Jesus may well have played a crucial role in the development of this enigmatic expression which he was able to use flexibly to express himself.⁴⁹

Let us look at several texts to see more clearly their possible meaning within the teaching of Jesus.

"There are several hints in this direction within "son of humanity" research. A.J.B. Higgins' approach opens the door to thinking of Jesus' use of the expression as new, original, and unique (see n. 24 in this chapter). Also, Lindars, in his early article, is clearly suggestive of this line of approach: *bar 'enasha'*=Jesus; through Jesus "son of humanity" becomes "Son of Humanity" (see n. 28). This need not imply attributing the apocalypitization of the expression to Jesus, but does suggest that the meaning of the expression and the developing self-understanding of Jesus are closely woven together. Dunn is even open to the individualization of the Daniel 7 imagery as having roots in Jesus' usage (*Christology in the Making*, 86-87, 96). Bruce Chilton's assessment seems apt: "While research in this area - which proceeds at a remarkable rate - has laid bare some of the lineaments of meaning which may lie behind Jesus' use of the phrase, a single exact parallel has yet to be found. The conclusion seems reasonable that Jesus applied a somewhat out-of-the-way phrase to himself, and gave it fresh meaning" (*A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible* [Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1984], 178-79). In an interesting but debatable fashion, A.E. Harvey proceeds along these lines with respect to the title Messiah: the content of the expression is not pre-determined but to be derived from its application to Jesus (*Jesus and the Constraints of History* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982], 80-84, 120-53).

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the son of humanity has nowhere to lay his head." (Mt 8:20; // Lk 9:58)

This is a saying from Q not influenced by Daniel 7. The context of the saying is discipleship. Jesus is responding to someone who has just said, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus used the occasion to teach something about the cost of discipleship. The saying is a self-reference, but not an exclusive self-reference. Neither is it a universal statement. It doesn't apply to anyone and everyone. It applies to those who intend to follow Jesus and can accept the hardship of that calling. Thus the meaning of the saying is "someone such as I."⁵⁰ The contrast is between Jesus with his disciples and others. "I will follow you wherever you go." "But, do you realize, someone such as I has nowhere to lay his head."

"The son of humanity will be delivered into human hands, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." (Mk 9:31)

Lindars suggests that the Marcan passion predictions can be traced back to three authentic underlying Aramaic sayings. It is commonly acknowledged that the details of the passion predictions came after the fact and are not part of the original Jesus material (e.g., reference to "the elders and the chief priests and the scribes"). Our question is whether the core of the passion predictions functions according to the *bar 'enasha'* idiom, or what part of the prediction can be taken as authentic because it is in accord with the Aramaic idiom. Lindars argues that the underlying saying is, "Someone may be delivered up."⁵¹

Lindars argues that the resurrection prediction had an origin separate from that of the passion prediction (which does not deny the possibility of its also being grounded in the teaching of Jesus). The underlying passion prediction

⁵⁰Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man*, 31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 68, 60-74.

was simply an expression of Jesus' premonition of death: "someone may be delivered up." The rest of the saying cannot be reconstructed.

And then they will see the son of humanity coming in clouds with great power and glory. (Mk 13:26; // Mt 24:30; // Lk 21:27)

This Marcan text refers to the future and manifests a dependence on Daniel 7. The verse is part of the "Marcan apocalypse." The setting is the period shortly before or shortly after the outbreak of the 66-70 C.E. revolt. It is an apocalyptic portrayal of the parousia of Jesus, an event expected to take place soon. The disciples must read the signs right and not follow false prophets, preachers, and messiahs. Then "the son of humanity," Jesus, will come in all his heavenly glory. Casey, Lindars, and Vermes argue that Mark 13:26 and 14:62 are the product of Christianity rather than being authentic Jesus sayings.

Marcan research suggests that Mark as a whole may be a product of an apocalyptic community.⁵² Mark 13 manifests both the literary structure and the motifs of an apocalypse (the presentation of a present crisis with historical precedents; pointing toward an eschatological fulfillment, with the primary concern being the present critical moment in which there is required the endurance of the faithful, even to the point of martyrdom; and an apocalyptic philosophy of history, the view that God's purpose for creation has been thwarted by demonic forces which shortly and finally will be defeated when God's reign begins).

The question at this point is how much of this apocalypse is Marcan or even pre-Marcan and how much goes back to Jesus himself.⁵³ Mark may have compiled it from varied sayings and sources. The composition can be attributed to

⁵²H.C. Kee, *Community of the New Age, Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 65-66

⁵³*Ibid.*, 43-49. Kee refers to the research of Haenchen, Lohmeyer, Lamprecht, and Hartmann. All of these vary in their approach to Mark 13, and yet all speak of

Mark without denying the authenticity of a particular saying within it. Yet Casey's conclusion is that Mark 13:26 is not an authentic saying of Jesus but falls within that group of sayings produced by the early Church under the influence of Daniel 7:13.⁵⁴ Mark 13:26 is clearly dependent on Daniel 7:13. About this there is no question.

The future sayings directly influenced by Daniel 7:13 reflect a titular use which we have rejected as original with Jesus. The use of *ho huios tou anthropou* or *bar 'enasha'* as an apocalyptic title does not reflect the original Aramaic idiom but results from the expression's having been translated into Greek, and reflects the growing apocalypticization and parousia expectation of the early Church. The use of "the son of humanity" idiom in connection with the parousia is not the starting point but the end result of such development. The tradition begins with an Aramaic usage at home in the world of spoken Aramaic.

We have looked at several representative sayings. What we are aware of in Jesus' use of the *bar 'enasha'* expression is his awareness of his humanity, of his solidarity with us, of his sense of mission and authority. Jesus is not expressing in his usage any identification with a particular messianic or eschatological role. The expression is to some degree enigmatic because the man using it is to some degree an enigma. What is a common enough Aramaic expression becomes a way of speaking for the prophet from Nazareth. *Bar enasha'* is a vehicle for his self-expression. The expression as used by Jesus then is not pre-determined in its content (it is not an apocalyptic title) but receives its content from Jesus' way of using it. It is neither more nor less than what Jesus puts into it. The *bar enasha'* expression is not so much an access to Jesus' self-understanding as his self-understanding is to his

a composite background or sayings tradition behind the Marcan redaction. Even if there are redactional elements in individual verses, this does not exclude a Jesus tradition. Lamprecht sees redactional work in verses 1, 2a, 3f, 5a, 7f, 10, 13, 14, 17, 20, 23, 27. Our concern here is verse 26. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, sees Mark 13 as the evangelist's own composition, p. 161, a composition with a unity, p. 166, and yet a connection of originally unconnected pieces.

⁵⁴ Casey, *Son of Man*, 236-37. See also 165-78.

use of the expression. This partly accounts for the difficulties we have had in understanding the expression. It is not a defined, pre-Christian Jewish concept. It is Jesus' way of speaking.

Jesus and Apocalypticism

We come back to where we were: Jesus' self-awareness was prophetic and social. It is best not to describe it as messianic (which is not to say that it was non-messianic) and best not to describe it as apocalyptic (which is not to say there was not apocalyptic influence at all in his life and message). Messianism and apocalypticism simply do not provide the primary access we need in order to understand him.

Can we say anything more at this point about Jesus' eschatology? We are beginning to see Jesus as a socially and religiously conscious prophet in an eschatologically conscious period of history. Is there any other way of describing Jesus' perspective - one for whom the coming of God's reign was central to his mission and self-understanding? In Jesus of Nazareth we have a (perhaps unparalleled) creative advance within religious history. Yet the language of Judaism is still of help. Jesus' eschatology had its roots in the same place that Jewish eschatology had its - in Jewish hope. *Jesus was a prophet of hope.* And Jesus' hope was rooted in his faith and experience of God, and God's fidelity to God's promises. Jesus' God was a compassionate, generous, and faithful God; no three adjectives could better describe God's love for the people. Jesus knew God personally. Jesus' hope rested upon his faith that God would be true to God's promises. Jesus knew that a new age was close at hand, and in fact for all practical purposes had already begun whether people realized it or not. Jesus also knew that God's fulfillment was not what the people expected. He preached no messianic revolt, no new earthly kingdom of Israel, no cataclysmic disappearance of the world as he knew it, no descent of a new Jerusalem from the

heavens. But he did preach that God's reign was close at hand - for those who had the eyes to see. The era of *God's justice* reigning *on earth* had already begun.

Perhaps the most important way to describe Jesus' eschatology is to say that it was Jesus' eschatology. And it was an eschatology that did not frame itself in terms of *either* this world or another world but rather that God's future for God's people and Israel's future involved *both* this world *and* another world which would co-exist with greater harmony. *God would now reign on earth*, and this reign was about to begin. Jesus' eschatological consciousness was essentially a God-consciousness, that of a prophet to Israel.

Before we proceed to discuss Jesus' teaching, we can bring together a picture toward which our discussion has pointed thus far: Jesus of Nazareth, someone thoroughly human, is also someone called by God. This man was God's man. Although Jesus was truly one of us, the starting point for understanding Jesus must be God. This insight into who Jesus was, that he cannot be understood or interpreted apart from God, neither does disservice to nor compromises our affirmation that Jesus is one of us. Jesus as a human being is God's.

The narrative of the first sequence of events in the public life of Jesus dramatically reveals Jesus' relationship to God. Jesus received the baptism of John, experienced more keenly the action of God in his life, was driven even further into the wilderness where his faith and fidelity were put to the test. With whom are we dealing in these events in the wilderness if not a son of God? The Synoptic accounts of the baptism portray Jesus as one called by God: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mt 1:11). Jesus' ordeal in the wilderness allowed God to shape and form a man of faith and prayer, of the *Shema*, whose God was the God of Abraham and Sarah in whom he trusted.

Jesus left the wilderness and eventually returned to Galilee to do his heavenly Father's work; he was an itinerant preacher who healed and drove out demons and proclaimed with all his heart the coming of his Father's reign. Here was

one on whose heart it was indeed written that there is but one God whom alone we serve. Who was this Jesus? A prophet, not unlike the prophets of old, one whose entire life was rooted in the Lord, who thirsted for justice, who brought God's word once again to God's people, who was salvation in their midst. Jesus had been anointed with the gift of the Spirit. He knew himself to be and was perceived as a prophet. Although in another age and with a different temperament, he was in some sense another Isaiah (a prophet of faith in God), another Hosea (a prophet of divine love), another Amos (a prophet of justice), one who preached and practiced the message of Micah (who acted justly, loved tenderly, and walked humbly with God). Like Isaiah, upon whom he must often have meditated, this prophet understood himself and ought to be understood in terms of the two bases of faith and justice, or love of God and love of neighbor, or obedience and deeds of loving kindness.

Not only was he a prophet, but a prophet at the dawn of a new period of history. Not a Messiah in accord with popular expectations. Nor some apocalyptic seer. But a God-conscious prophet to the poor of Israel. A man of faith.

And a man of prayer. From the traditional *Shema* of Israel to the innovative *Abba* of his own prayer, it is in his prayer that we are given an appropriate context for understanding and interpreting this first century prophetic figure. For this thoroughly God-conscious prophet, the Lord of the universe was his *abba imma*. The relationship of Jesus with God was intensely personal; he saw the Lord of Israel as his very own father and he as God's son. What Jesus may well have learned by experience in the wilderness remained with him all his life - his strength was *Abba*.

To understand this man is to penetrate that relationship with his God. Indeed, it is to come to know the Father as well as the son. Prayer, faith, God's word, God's reign form the very being of Jesus of Nazareth, someone like us, but also one of God's chosen ones. Not only someone who was in solidarity with God, but also someone who was in solidarity with the people.