

Danielic Apocalyptic and the Son of Man  
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Introduction

The expression “Son of Man” is employed by Jesus as a self-reference<sup>1</sup>, and is explicitly quoted by him during his trial (from Daniel 7:13-14) as a messianic self-designation.<sup>2</sup> Geza Vermes<sup>3</sup> believes that at the level of the historical Jesus the phrase in the gospels was little more than a form of self-referential circumlocution. He suggests that the term originates from the Aramaic<sup>4</sup> *bar nash(a)* and that it is used in a generic sense (someone like me, or “I”) as opposed to a titular usage in the Greek - *ho huios tou anthropou* (“**the** Son of Man”). Vermes argues that “son of man” is simply a synonym for man or humanity, and a substitute for the indefinite pronoun (“one”) and does not imply a messianic title.

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<sup>1</sup> The autobiographical designation is utilized 81 times in the gospels.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Gaston suggests that ‘Son of Man’ is not synonymous with ‘Messiah’ because the gospel usage of the two titles is markedly different; on the one hand Jesus seems to attempt to keep his identity as Messiah a secret and on the other hand he openly refers to himself as ‘the Son of Man’. Gaston concludes that the question Jesus posed Peter in Matt 16:13-16 indicates a differentiation in understanding, demonstrating that ‘Son of Man’ was not synonymous with ‘Messiah’ - “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (The people had all sorts of answers to this question).....but Peter’s reply was that the ‘Son of Man’ was the Messiah. See Tom Gaston, *The Son of Man*, (CeJBI Vol.1 no.4 Oct 2007), 3-19. An alternative suggestion is that Jesus deliberately adopted ‘Son of Man’ as a messianic self-reference **because the term was ambiguous** (thus keeping his messianic identity secret) and also because of its corporate associations (like the Suffering Servant), thus making him a representative individual (like the Israelite kings and priests). The Son of Man was not a well-known recognizable figure, but an enigmatic one that needed explanation and therefore ideal for concealing his identity – it **was synonymous** with the Messiah but only to those (like Peter) to whom it had been revealed.

<sup>3</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (New York: Harper, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Hebrew sources have Son of Man not **the** Son of Man

However, Christopher Tuckett understands “Son of Man” on the lips of Jesus as a self-reference to a corporate entity embodied in a single individual who experiences suffering and rejection and is clearly indebted to the mysterious figure of Daniel 7. Tuckett asks: “Does not the language barrier militate strongly against such a view? Is it not the case that (assuming Jesus spoke in Aramaic) and the Aramaic phrase *bar nasha(a)* is such an ordinary, common place phrase that it simply will not bear the weight that the interpretation suggested above places on it. Are we entitled to try to work backwards from the Greek forms of the saying to any ‘historical Jesus’ without first re-translating such sayings back into Aramaic and asking what such words would have meant to an Aramaic speaker or hearer? The argument has some force but, I believe, is not entirely persuasive ... Nevertheless it is now widely agreed in studies of semantics that words, or indeed phrases do not derive their meanings exclusively from themselves: meaning is **often derived as much from the context in which words or phrases are used**”.<sup>1</sup>

Is “Son of Man” used generically or indefinitely? Is the expression messianic? Does it designate a corporate reality (collectively the saints) or an individual? Is New Testament adoption of the *Son of Man* legitimized by Old Testament or/and Enochic usage? These and other considerations will be partly answered by our investigation **into the most important context** in which these particular words or phrases are employed, namely at the prosecution of Jesus and of Stephen.

### *Son of Man as a Self-Designation of Jesus*

Two lines of argument are countered against the use of *Son of Man* as a self-designation by Jesus: (1) that Daniel 7 does not employ the expression as a title but rather as a description; and (2) that the expression is an Aramaic idiom of self reference and not a title. Different mechanisms for understanding the terms of self reference have been proposed – from the

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Tuckett, “The Son of Man and Daniel 7: Inclusive Aspects of Early Christologies” in *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society* (ed. Kieran J. O’Mahony; *JSNT* Sup 241; London: Continuum, 2004), 182-83.

general to the specific (M. Casey),<sup>1</sup> as a generic reference (G. Vermes) or to stress that the referent belongs to a particular class or group (B. Lindars).

Current opinion seems to favour the last view as the appropriate explanation of the idiom. The authenticity of the Son of Man sayings have been evaluated by the three main scholars that have done work in this field – but their selection **is reached by rejecting the sayings which reflect the influence of Daniel 7**. The authenticity of the *Son of Man* sayings according to Casey, Vermes and Lindars are given in the following table:

Text		Casey	Lindars	Vermes	
Mark	2:10	*	*	*	
	2:28	*		*	
	8:31			*	
	8:38	*			
	9:9			*	
	9:12	*		*	
	9:31		*	*	
	10:33			*	
	10:45	*	*	*	
	14:21a,b	*	*	*	
	14:41			*	
	Matthew	8:20	*	*	*
		11:19	*	*	*
		16:13			*
26:22				*	
Luke	11:30		*	*	
	12:8	*	*		
	12:10	*	*	*	
	19:10			*	
	22:48	*			
	24:7			*	

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<sup>1</sup> M. Casey, *Son of Man*, (London: SPCK, 1979); idem, “General, Generic and Indefinite: The Use of the Term ‘Son of Man’ in Aramaic Sources and in the Teaching of Jesus,” *JSNT* 29 (1978): 21-56.

The effect of the approach in question is to deny that Jesus thought of himself in terms of the *Son of Man* of Daniel 7. According to Lindars, “it carried no Christological meaning as such.”<sup>1</sup>

### The Trial of Jesus and Stephen

Acts 7:56<sup>2</sup> is one of the only places in the NT (outside the gospels) where “Son of Man” is used to refer to Jesus. This is particularly relevant as the trial of Stephen in Acts 7 bears many similarities with that of Jesus. Both were tried before the Jerusalem Council; both were falsely accused; both were accused of blasphemy; both were accused of threatening the temple; both [in death] committed their spirits; both asked forgiveness for those who were responsible for their deaths. James D. G. Dunn believes that the *Son of Man* tradition in Acts 7:56 is probably secondary and directly based on Daniel itself.<sup>3</sup> Hyam Maccoby in *The Mythmaker, Paul and the Invention of Christianity* regards the trials as doublets:

“The pattern of both trials, then, is that the defendant is charged with the offence of speaking against the Temple, but this charge is forgotten when the defendant bursts out during the trial with what is regarded as a blasphemous statement. Formal procedures are then thrown to the winds and the defendant is found guilty of an alleged crime committed during the trial itself, and different from the crime for which he was brought to trial in the first

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<sup>1</sup> B. Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 170

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 2:6 is the other place (quoting Pss 8:5).

<sup>3</sup> J. D. G. Dunn argues that Daniel 7 influenced NT traditions, but that it is extremely difficult to identify the origin or first impact of these traditions. He presents three basic possibilities in the Gospels: that use of Daniel 7 began with Jesus’ hope of being vindicated by the heavenly Son of Man figure; that it originated as a post-Easter elaboration of Jesus’ own use of “Son of Man”; or that Jesus himself drew upon Daniel 7 to articulate his own sense of mission. Imagery from Daniel 7 is also used in Revelation, but there is no obvious contact with the Synoptic tradition here. Instead, John was directly influenced by Daniel. James D. G. Dunn, “The Danielic Son of Man in the New Testament”, in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (ed. J. J. Collins and P. W. Flint; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 528-549.

instance. The ‘trials’ of Jesus and of Stephen are incredible, because they depend on a definition of the terms ‘Messiah’, ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of Man’ that did not exist in the Jewish religion of the time, but did exist in the later doctrines of the Christian Church, when all three expressions had been given a connotation of divinity”.<sup>1</sup>

Even though *The Mythmaker* is an outrageously tendentious piece of revisionism the observation remains valid and will be countered later in the article. For our purpose, both trials will be treated as essentially the same, motivated and engineered for the same reasons, and heavily influenced by apocalyptic *Son of Man* traditions and first century Danielic eschatological expectations.

### Danielic Apocalyptic

Although it is certain that first century Judaism interpreted the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 (and possibly the fourth beast of Daniel 7) as Rome,<sup>2</sup> and in Matt.24:15 Jesus (alluding to Dan 9: 27) indicates that ‘*the abomination that causes desolation*’ is at least connected with the Roman invasion, it is also apparent that this hermeneutical paradigm shift occurred after the time of Antiochus. This can be observed by Josephus’ interpretation of Daniel 8 which canvases two interpretations.

“And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel’s vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass. In the very same manner Daniel **also wrote** concerning the Roman government, and that our country should be made desolate by them” *Ant.* 10.11.7.

Critical scholarship largely regards Daniel as a Maccabean product. The Maccabean interpretation, accepted by the majority scholarly consensus, is that Daniel presents a record of past events which transpired during the Maccabean period, i.e., the persecutions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (170 to

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<sup>1</sup> Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker, Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, 1998), 75-78.

<sup>2</sup> See: Tom Gaston, “The Son of Man” *CJBI* 1 Oct 2007: 3-19.

164). H. L. Ginsberg regards Daniel 2 as pre-Epiphanian as it speaks of a worldwide kingdom with scant regard to Jewish dominance, whereas Daniel 7 (regarded by Ginsberg as Epiphanian) asserts perpetual Jewish sovereignty over the nations<sup>1</sup> - many other commentators would regard Daniel 2 and 7 as at least partly parallel. Despite Ginsberg's detection of different strata within the chapter, the unity of Daniel 7 has generally been held by scholars of all shades of opinion. Can the Roman and Maccabean views be reconciled?

The eschatological vision of Daniel 7 was not fulfilled in the time of Antiochus, but neither was it completely fulfilled in the first century Roman invasion. Evangelical interpreters circumvent the problem by introducing the concept of prophetic postponement into a dispensationalist framework. This has some validity, but the prophecy (here we think particularly of Daniel 9) is deliberately fluid and multifaceted and intended to incorporate short term and longer term fulfilment – such as the immediate return from exile, the Hasmonean period, the Roman occupation and the eschatological culmination. This will be elucidated in a future article. For our purpose we propose that first century Jewish opinion on Daniel was probably not unanimous and possibly confused, with the added complication of establishment pressure (exercised by the Roman appointed priestly class) to avoid any derogatory identification of the fourth kingdom/beast (particularly by messianic movements)<sup>2</sup> with Rome.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Ginsberg the reference to an eleventh king in verse 24b was inserted by an interpolator who forgot to add mention of an eleventh horn. H. L. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel* (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1984), 11.

<sup>2</sup> C. A. Evans comments in his essay, “Messianic Hopes and Messianic Figures in Late Antiquity”, that “the Jewish messianism of the intertestamental period and the first two centuries of the Common Era posed a real threat to Roman order. The catastrophic rebellions that occurred in three successive generations (66-70 C.E., 115-116 C.E., and 132-135 C.E.) well illustrate the prophetic gap between prophetic expectation and militant activism”. Available online in PDF format [cited July 26 2007] <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/HUM/RELS/chairs/cchair/lecture/s/Evans%20Messianic%20Hopes.pdf>.

## Danielic Motifs in the Trials of Jesus and Stephen

A simplified summary of the characteristics of the persecutor, who was *pre-figured* by Antiochus, will demonstrate the importance of Danielic motifs to the trials of Jesus and Stephen and contextualize the *Son of Man* traditions utilized by Jesus (and Stephen):

1) Antiochus attempted to Hellenize the Jews by changing their customs. He was determined to take their identity away by challenging their religion and forbidding the Torah and changing the feast days:

“And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and think to change times and laws...” (Dan 7:25)

“And after two years fully expired (**this was the 145<sup>th</sup> year**) the king sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Judah, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude...For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah that they should follow the strange laws of the land. And **forbid burnt offerings**, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the Sabbaths and festival days” (1 Macc 1: 29, 44-45).

2) He destroyed the city and the sanctuary (Dan 9:27), and this involved the taking away of the daily sacrifice which had been prophesied by Daniel (Dan 8:12, 9:27). Josephus records,

“Now it came to pass after two years in the **hundred and forty-fifth year**, on the twenty-fifth day of that month which is by us called Chasleu, and by the Macedonians Apelleus, in the hundred and fifty-third Olympiad, that the king came up to Jerusalem, and, pretending peace, he got possession of the city by treachery...’ [Ant.12.5.4] .....And this desolation came to pass according to the prophecy of Daniel, which was given four hundred and eighty years before; for he declared that the Macedonians would dissolve the worship [for some] time.” [Ant. 12.7.6].

The parallels between Daniel 8:24 and 9:27 are obvious:

Chapter 8:24	Chapter 9:27
v.24) He will become <b>very strong</b> but not by his own power (NIV)	He will <b>strengthen</b> a covenant with many for one ‘seven’
v.24) He will cause astounding destruction	War will continue to the end, and desolations have been decreed
v.24) He will destroy the mighty men and the Holy people	Will destroy the city and the sanctuary

Antiochus IV Epiphanes<sup>1</sup> induced the collaboration of the priestly class in order to stabilize his grip on Judea. B. K. Waltke sums it up as follows; “His intervention in Jerusalem was brought about in part by the factions within the Jewish high-priestly state. The personal strife between Honia III (Gk: *Onias*), his brother Yeshua (Jesus, called Jason by the Greeks), and a certain Menelaus of the tribe of Benjamin supported by the powerful house of Tobiah, was exacerbated by the fact that Jason and Menelaus wished to introduce Hellenistic culture while Onias stood by the traditional custom and law. By the promise both of larger tribute and of habituating the Jews to Greek customs Jason induced Antiochus, an intense champion of Hellenization, to establish him as high priest in place of his brother (2 Macc.4:7-20)”<sup>2</sup>. Parallels with the first century situation regarding collaboration between the priestly class and the Roman authorities are obvious.

3) Finally, he possessed the opposite characteristics of Immanuel:

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<sup>1</sup> Rendered on coins as ‘God Manifest’.

<sup>2</sup> B. K. Waltke, “Antiochus IV Epiphanes” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, (ed., G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 1:145-6.

<b>Antichrist</b>	<b>Christ</b>
“Shall destroy (corrupt) wonderfully” (Dan.8:24).	“His name shall be wonderful counsellor” (Isa. 9:6).
“By peace destroy (corrupt) many” (Dan.8:25).	“Prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6).
“And his power shall be mighty” (Dan.8:24).	“Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6).

Jews of the Hellenistic period sought a messiah to restore Israel’s independence and righteousness. However, there seems to have been considerable variation in eschatological expectations (sometimes both a royal *and* a priestly messiah were expected) and the initial fulfillment in Daniel was probably by the high priest.

*The Accusations against Jesus and Stephen*

The chief accusation against both Jesus and Stephen was that they desired to destroy the Temple and sought to change the traditions and laws associated with Judaism:

“But they did not find anything, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared; “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” the high priest stood up and said to him, “Have you no answer? What is this that they are testifying against you?” But Jesus was silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and declared, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? Now you have heard the blasphemy! (Matt 26:60-65)

“They brought forward false witnesses who said, “This man does not stop saying things against this holy place and the

law. For we have heard him saying that Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.’ All who were sitting in the council looked intently at Stephen and saw his face was like the face of an angel.” (Acts 6:13-15)

The priestly authorities equated the actions of Jesus (along with his disciple Stephen) with that of the antichrist - Antiochus Epiphanes, who wished to destroy the temple and abolish the traditions. As far as they were concerned, Jesus was the antichrist spoken of by Daniel. His words and actions, in cleansing the temple, were deliberately misconstrued (John 2:13-22) as the actions of a man who thought of himself as “God manifest”<sup>1</sup> (like Antiochus), and who would either lead a rebel movement to overthrow the ruling elite, or undermine their authority with the people thereby rendering their position (as Roman agents) superfluous. Those present may have thought they were his judges but, in fact, the reverse was true. Jesus answered them on their own terms – that of the Daniel prophecy. He was the “*Son of Man*”, who would be vindicated and return as *their* Judge (Dan.7:13). Their position as servants of Rome would share the same fate as the fourth beast of Daniel (cf. “But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end” Dan 7:26). Hence, Jesus’ reply was regarded as blasphemy by the high priest (another Danielic response referring to Antiochus: “a mouth that spake very great things”, Dan 7:20).

Stephen’s rambling defence now makes sense; it was not an irrelevant account of Israelite history, but rather a demonstration that the most important revelations to Israel had occurred outside the temple, *even outside the land* (to Abraham in Ur and Moses in Sinai), in fact God did not even demand a permanent residence, as He was completely satisfied with a temporary abode. The priests (their proxies) alleged that Jesus and his followers had come to destroy the temple (like the antichrist); Stephen answers that the temple is not important as a vehicle for revelation. Jesus has

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<sup>1</sup> There is a difference in being the manifestation of God and “God manifest” in the same way that the son of God is not the same as “God the son”.

replaced the temple and is now the most holy place: “Howbeit, the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48).<sup>1</sup>

The impact of Jesus’ resurrection and the temple’s centrality to Jewish worship was the issue. The demotion of the position of the temple (and especially the erosion of priestly authority) bore the equivalence (to the ruling elite) of destroying the temple in Daniel’s vision:

“The people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Dan.9:26)

Stephen completes his apologetic with a vision of Jesus in the heavenly temple,

“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:55-56).

Stephen combines the language of the royal Psalms (2:7-8 and 110: 1) with Danielic Son of Man traditions. This would have indicated to his audience that Jesus, as a king-priest (Melchizidek- Pss 110), had replaced the priesthood; that he was standing (instead of sitting) to ask for the heathen as his inheritance, (side-lining the Jews because *‘they took counsel against the Lord and his Messiah’* - Pss 2); and that he would return as God’s vindicated and appointed judge (Son of Man - Dan.7) to receive the kingdom on behalf of the saints. This explains the hostile reaction. They had accused Stephen of wanting to destroy the institution. Stephen argued that the institution (and their position) was largely irrelevant, as God had demoted the Temple and the priesthood from their privileged position. God had chosen a new Temple and priest. Priestly opposition to Jesus made *them* collectively the antichrist and God would punish them by removing all their beloved institutions and even themselves from the land.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Dan 9:24; “To anoint the most Holy [place...make an end of sins...and bring in everlasting righteousness” (the kingdom).

There are other Danielic allusions in the trial narrative. When Stephen commences his defence we are told that the council, “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). Stephen had previously supplied the widow’s food. Likewise, the book of Daniel commences with Daniel and his friends refusing the kings meat and being visually assessed for the effects of their new diet: “let our countenance be looked upon before thee” The result was positive; “At the end of ten days their countenance appeared fairer and fatter in flesh...” (Dan 1:13-15). The face of Stephen had therefore become like the face of his master (the Son of Man) as he also refused the ‘kings meat’ and shared the meagre diet of the widows and yet he was seen to prosper.

### *Who is the Son of Man in Daniel?*

This is a difficult question. In recent times C. H. Dodd has given voice to the corporate interpretation. Dunn is largely in accord, perceiving that ‘one like a son of man’ is *identical* with the ‘saints of the Most High’,<sup>1</sup> concluding that *the man-like figure represents the people of Israel*, just as the beast-like figures represent the enemies of Israel. With regard to the New Testament individualizing interpretation Dodd says, “The New Testament use of the title “Son of Man” for Christ results from the individuation of this corporate conception”.<sup>2</sup>

The context of the “son of man” in Daniel 7 seems to demand a corporate interpretation; however, we must take care that we are not peering through the wrong end of the telescope. There seems to be fluidity between corporate and individual conceptualization. J. Dunn argues; “It is certainly true that Dan. 7 itself interprets the four beasts as ‘four kings’ (7.17), but this was not unnatural where ‘king’ was a widely recognised metonymy for ‘kingdom’ (cf. e.g. 2.44;8.21f.)”.<sup>3</sup> However, against this we must place Daniel’s statement to Nebuchadnezzar – “*Thou art this head of gold*” (2:38). This opens up the prospect of representation. The individual (in this case Nebuchadnezzar) represented Babylon and embodied all the characteristics of the empire in his person – as a consequence the individual was literally changed into a beast (Dan 4:30-37). Certain individuals in Israel had a representative role – for

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<sup>1</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 68-69.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, (London: Nisbet, 1952), 118.

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 69.

example the anointed high priest; here we think particularly of the Day of Atonement, where the priest acted on behalf of the nation. Similarly, the Suffering Servant in Isaiah is demonstrably King Hezekiah, who represented in his person the idealized corporate identity that the nation (as Yahweh's servant) should have manifested.

Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis offers fruitful suggestion when he observes, "That the individual angelomorphic human in mind in this passage is the High Priest. In this case there is a reuse of the ancient Near East and Biblical Chaokampf tradition within the context of the cult, the New Year festivals and the Day of Atonement in particular: the human figure comes to the Ancient of Days carried by clouds just as the high priest on the Day of Atonement enters the Holy of Holies surrounded by clouds of incense. This reading makes good sense of the literary structure of Daniel 2-7 and chapter 7 itself; parallels with the Enochic ascent in 1 Enoch 14 and may shed important light on a debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees regarding the use of incense by the high priest at Yom Kippur".<sup>1</sup>

The similarities with the post-exilic high priest Joshua are informative. Joshua is also brought into the heavenly council where he is vindicated. In Zechariah's vision (Zech 3:1-10) we see Joshua the high priest in a state of absolute cultic and spiritual disqualification; dressed in garments, stained with excrement. He is accused in the heavenly 'court room' with Satan acting as agent for the prosecution, Michael as angel for the defence, and God as the Judge. The question is whether the Zadokite priesthood had become so corrupted by the exile that it was no longer fit for office. This probably reflects the power struggle and rivalries between the hierocratic movement of Zadokite priests and those who opposed the Zadokite priesthood.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The Son of Man", (Second Oxford Lecture on the Development of Christology, 1998). Available online in html format [http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~www\\_sd/med\\_oxford2.html](http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~www_sd/med_oxford2.html) [cited July 25 2007]. Fletcher-Louis' doctoral work was in the area of angelomorphic representations of leading human figures such as the patriarchs and the High priest in Second Temple Judaism.

<sup>2</sup> L. G. Perdue, *Proverbs* (Louisville: WJK Press 2000), 55-58. J. Blenkinsopp, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel*,

situation is resolved when God effectively cleanses the priesthood and clothes Joshua with a clean garment. Typologically Joshua represents Jesus, who as “a son of man” shared our weak human nature – the charge against Jesus (and mankind) of wanting equality with God (cf. Michael: who is like God?) is thrown out of the heavenly court and Joshua/Jesus receives the resurrection garments of immortality.

### Conclusions

Dunn concludes that, “we lack any sort of firm evidence that the ‘one like a son of man’ in Dan.7 was understood in pre-Christian Judaism as the Messiah, pre-existent or otherwise.”<sup>1</sup> **Therefore the use of the son of man tradition originated with Jesus himself** – a logical conclusion when we consider his unique grasp of the Old Testament. Dunn has suggested that Jesus began by using the Aramaic idiom to refer to himself and then recognized in the use of the same phrase in Daniel 7 an allusion to the vindication which he expected from God. This led to the use of Daniel 7 on a broader scale in his sayings, and to the development of the term as a means of referring to himself as the authoritative messianic figure. Thus, in some sayings Jesus will simply have used a self-designation, but in others he was making a conscious allusion to Daniel 7.<sup>2</sup>

The suggestion made by Dunn allows for a natural evolution of the phrase – its meaning developed alongside the growing self-consciousness of Jesus. It may be of consequence that the Son of Man sayings all occur *after* the synoptic narrative relays the news of John’s imprisonment (Matt 4:12, Mark

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(Louisville: WJK Press, 1995), 83-98. G. Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 43-75, 203-205.

<sup>1</sup> *Christology*, “On the basis of the evidence available to us it is not possible to speak with any confidence of a pre-Christian Son of Man concept.” [95]; “The earliest dateable interpretation of Daniel’s ‘son of man’ as a particular individual is the Christian identification of the ‘son of man’ with Jesus.” [96]; “The thought of the Son of Man as a pre-existent heavenly figure does not seem to have emerged in Jewish or Christian circles before the last decades of the first century AD.” [96].

<sup>2</sup> *Christology*, 86-87.

1:4, Luke 3:20) although it must be added that this event is recorded as occurring early in the public ministry in all three accounts. The saying is most prolific in Luke 9<sup>1</sup> *after* we are informed how Jesus is identified as the risen Baptist (v. 7). The saying in Matt 11:19 also follows John's question from prison in Matt 11:4. Is it possible that the imprisonment and death of John acted as the prompt to adopt the term? The imprisonment and death of John would have had a profound effect on his mission and his messianic self-consciousness. Would the growing realization that his mission would end in rejection and death (like that of John) caused him to employ a term that was associated with corporate suffering and vindication – thereby individualizing the term in recognition of his representative role (like that of the priest or king)?

Questions remain; why is the term not employed in early Christian writings? The Epistles refer to Jesus as “Christ” (messiah/anointed), but not as the “Son of Man”. Is it because it became too heavily associated with his sufferings (rather than his triumph), or do other, more sinister, reasons lie behind the omission?<sup>2</sup> Why is no Davidic Messiah mentioned in Daniel?

Despite the remaining questions, one thing is clear; the use of Dan 7:13 by Jesus (and Stephen) during the trial was not arbitrary or accidental, nor is it attributable to church tradition, but rather it was a deliberate response by the historical Jesus (and Stephen) to prosecution charges which drew their theological warrant from Danielic apocalyptic – not only is the trial saying the *crux interpretum* of the debate; it is the most authentic of all the Son of Man traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 9: 22, 26, 44, 56, 58.

<sup>2</sup> Aside from the Gospel occurrences, the title “Son of Man” is never used as a title in the intertestamental literature except in the Similitudes of Enoch. Is it possible that Enochic literature hijacked the “Son of Man” title in order to present an alternative to Christianity? Instead of the resurrected Christ we have the myth of a translated Enoch as a pre-existent heavenly “Son of Man”.

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