

INTRODUCTION

The appearance not only of another book about the Son of man, but of one by an author already responsible for an earlier work on the subject, may perhaps require some explanation. In the last chapter of my earlier book, *Jesus and the Son of Man* (1964), the thesis was outlined that Jesus confidently expected vindication of his mission after his death by being given, in the presence of God, a status of exaltation that involved the judgmental functions traditionally associated with the apocalyptic Son of man.¹ The present work seeks to develop this thesis, and to that extent it is a logical sequel to *JSM*. It was suggested as a worthwhile undertaking by study of subsequent contributions to the unending debate, some of which have been used in support of the thesis presented here, while others, setting out theories which appear to me to be unconvincing, have served only to strengthen my adherence to it. The contribution of the present study, therefore, is not the presentation of a fresh or novel theory, but the defence, promotion, and development, against the background of recent significant work, and by detailed investigation of the relevant texts, of the theme stated above.

The first two chapters, constituting Part One, are intended mainly as necessary prolegomena to the study of texts in Part Two. Although not an actual part of the argument, these chapters are far from being a mere catalogue of the principal views and theories put forward since 1964. At a number of points they necessarily raise and discuss some of the issues of prime importance for the underlying theme. Thus the views of Vermes on the synoptic sayings are introduced in chapter I, and are followed in the last paragraph by an indication of the different approach to them adopted in Part Two. Again, chapter II concludes with references to Jeremias' classification of the Son of man sayings in two categories: those with, and those without, parallel versions or 'rivals' lacking the term. These references serve as a transition to the constructive work that follows, for Jeremias' classification has been taken as a convenient framework for the examination of texts in Part Two.

The position adopted in regard to the three main categories of Son of man sayings remains substantially the same as in *JSM*. It seems probable, however, that the 'present' sayings in Mark 2.10; Luke 7.34, par. Matt. 11.19; and Luke 9.58, par. Matt. 8.20 are most satisfactorily understood as examples of the christologizing, into the Son of man title, of *bar nasha* used by Jesus in an indefinite sense in reference to himself as 'a son of man', 'a man', 'someone'. The passion predictions (Mark 8.31; 9.31; 10.33f.; also Mark 9.12f.; Luke 17.25; 24.7) are all creations of the post-resurrection community. Nevertheless, it is possible that they have a common *ultimate* origin in a use by Jesus of *bar nasha* in much the same way as in the 'present' sayings, and even that Mark 9.31a, 'God [logical subject] will deliver up the [or a] man to men', may be 'the ancient nucleus' underlying them.²

It is among the 'future' sayings alone that possibly authentic sayings about the Son of man in a messianic sense are to be sought. Coordination of these with the other two categories of sayings has often been felt to be a problem. For the early church no problem existed. All the sayings were received as from Jesus, and the three types were all placed on the same level of authenticity. Jesus was believed to have adopted as a self-designation the messianic title Son of man in referring equally to his earthly activity, his approaching death and resurrection, and his destiny as God's agent in the judgment. But attempts to uphold this traditional biblical unity, or to trace a consistent pattern linking together the three kinds of Son of man sayings, carry conviction only where certain presuppositions are held. A basic dichotomy between the present and the passion sayings on the one hand, and the future sayings on the other, underlies the unity which has been imposed upon them - a unity which does not have to be traced back to Jesus himself.

PART ONE

I

THE SON OF MAN AND ANCIENT JUDAISM

A majority of recent writers continue to support the view that there existed in pre-Christian apocalyptic Judaism a concept of the eschatological Son of man, a transcendent and pre-existent being whose primary function in the End-time would be that of a judge, delivering the righteous and punishing the wicked. Besides H. E. Tödt,¹ E. Jüngel,² and F. Hahn³ may be mentioned the following. D. E. Nineham accepts the hypothesis without discussion.⁴ R. H. Fuller thinks the most likely source of the Son of man concept used by Jesus and the early church to be a pre-Christian apocalyptic tradition of the Son of man 'as the pre-existent divine agent of judgment and salvation'.⁵ C. K. Barrett supports the apocalyptic Son of man passages in the gospels, because 'they have a readily ascertainable setting in the Judaism with which, we may suppose, Jesus was familiar',⁶ and part of the evidence is provided in the *Similitudes of Enoch*.⁷ It is part of P. Vielhauer's⁸ different thesis (that it was not Jesus but the early church that spoke of him as the coming Son of man, and that Jesus did not use the term at all) that this concept and title were derived from apocalyptic Judaism. He is followed by H. Conzelmann.⁹ According to H. M. Teeple,¹⁰ who also denies to Jesus any Son of man sayings, the Son of man Christology began in Hellenistic Jewish Christianity, perhaps in Syria, and was derived from Jewish apocalyptic.

Two major contributions, by F. H. Borsch and C. Colpe, will now be discussed.

F. H. Borsch¹¹

At a time when doubts are being cast by some scholars¹² on the existence of a Son of man concept in Judaism, Borsch devotes a large part of his book to an attempt to show that not only in Judaism, but in the oriental world at large, the Son of man and related concepts were widespread and familiar. This is an approach, therefore, which draws upon the findings of the history of religions school. As the title of his book indicates, Borsch's task is two-fold, to trace a recognizable mythological Son of man (or Man)

pattern in the antecedents of Christianity, and to show how this pattern was actualized and, indeed, consciously fulfilled by the historical Jesus. At this stage we are almost entirely concerned with the former of these considerations.

After an introductory chapter reviewing the main attempts at a solution of the Son of man problem in the gospels, and finding them all unsatisfactory because too narrowly based, Borsch ventures the opinion that a far wider background of thought, transcending Judaism and involving beliefs current in the centuries surrounding the rise of Christianity, requires investigation. While he is not original in suggesting a link between the Son of man in the gospels and the Man-King mythology of the Near East, his investigation appears to be the most thorough on these lines. The beliefs in question, oriental and gnostic, in a variety of forms, concern the Man hero as Adam, Anthropos, Urmensch, Heavenly Man, etc. Among the sources examined are Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Poimandres, and the Nag Hammadi, Manichaean, and Mandaean texts. Borsch writes:

We have good cause for suspecting that there was a mythical conception of relative antiquity concerning a primal hero, conceived of as a Man who was once on earth, whose story contains some reference to defeat or death. Yet somehow he was also regarded as one who was or who was very closely allied with a glorious, cosmic Man figure of the heavens. While such legendary beliefs are never found in exactly the same guise and often appear only in fragmentary forms, and while we do not necessarily postulate some one original myth, there is reason to conclude that the variant descriptions are related.¹³

The next stage in the argument concerns the Royal Man (chapter III). Favouring the views of A. Bentzen and I. Engnell, who traced an intimate relationship between the concept of the first or primeval man and the king, Borsch finds the Jewish counterpart in the idea of Adam as the first royal man in paradise. One feature in particular, he urges, must be kept in mind: the suffering or humiliation of the royal personage or man-king before restoration to office.¹⁴ In Judaism this applies to Adam, but also to the king, as witness a number of psalms (16; 18; 21; 22; 69; 89; 116; 118) involving suffering and lamentation, or joy at the ending of tribulations. Without necessarily committing himself to full acceptance of the view that in the Israelite New Year festival the king is the suffering servant of Yahweh, Borsch shares the opinion that the concepts of the king and the suffering servant, along with those of the Messiah, the First Man, and the Son of Man, are related in origin. So he is able to associate them with the idea of the man-king suffering in the water, derived from the myth of the primeval conflict with chaos and the water monster.

In the next chapter ('The Man in Sectarian Life') Borsch turns to the quest for evidence of more direct and immediate sources of influence on Jesus' thought. This he finds above all in sectarian Judaism. It is, of course, well known that there were a number of baptizing Jewish sects. Borsch maintains that there is sufficient evidence to warrant the assumption that in some of them there was a connection between baptismal rites and belief in the Man in some form or other. About Mandaeism he expresses the opinion that 'it is no accident that the two features which seem to stand out in this regard are a baptismal practice which looks to be a form of a democratized kingship rite and various representations of a royal Man hero'.¹⁵ He states as a hypothesis that in the first century A.D., and probably earlier, there were 'a number of Jewish-oriented sects which practised forms of baptism as an ordination/coronation rite', and that 'for a number of these groups, and often in connection with their baptismal rites, speculation about or belief in the Man (in one or more of his guises) had a significant role to play'. The sources of these two features (baptism and the Man), and their association with one another, 'reach back to the ancient kingship ideologies'.¹⁶

Borsch recognizes that the apparent absence of baptism (in the form in which he envisages it) and of speculation about the Man among the Essenes and the Qumran sect would militate against his theory, since they would be the most likely sources of influence on Jesus. This he tries to counter in two ways. We are reminded that the Essene initiates wore white robes and revered the sun. Perhaps, it is urged, there is more here than meets the eye. 'For instance, the Mandaeans also wore white robes, and they wore them as signs of their priesthood, believing themselves at baptism to have become the exalted royal priests of God, representatives of the Adam above. There are also many relics of sun-worship in their rituals.'¹⁷ This kind of reasoning is not particularly convincing. Secondly, in the Qumran Hymns of Thanksgiving there is much language 'strikingly similar to that once associated with the sufferings of the royal figure':¹⁸ rejection, mockery, drowning in the waters, deliverance from the pit and elevation to the presence of God.

Most of this, however, can be explained simply as imitation of the biblical psalms. More problematic, perhaps, are references in the Hymns and elsewhere to a 'man': Borsch interprets this messianically, as others have done; but it is more likely that the term is generic, and refers to the sect.¹⁹ In any case, since, as Borsch has to admit, no passages of this kind come from unambiguously baptismal contexts, a connection between baptism and the Man figure cannot be proved, and he has to fall back on theorizing. He suggests that

it is not unlikely that some such language might have been used by some representative figure if and when a baptism took place. In which case the parallels with the language and themes studied previously may be indicative of a baptism in which the individual suffered before being exalted and coronated as a royal, Adam-like priest of God. In any case, it would appear that Qumran thinking may at least have been touched by these ideas.²⁰

A brief consideration of John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus also ends on a somewhat uncertain note, for the evidence 'does not prove that John the Baptist was a leader of the manner of sect which we are proposing, one that combined belief in a royal Man with baptism conceived of as an ordination or exaltation to association with or to the office of this Man'.²¹

Before proceeding to the New Testament material, Borsch raises three further problems. In the first place, even if the baptizing sectarian milieu was much concerned with the Man, the actual expression Son of man is not found there. This surely is very significant. Suppositions of the kind offered by Borsch cannot be said to gain in credibility by being shored up by further suppositions. Even if the 'special Man' was regarded as the son of the Man, in the sense that the king, as a royal personage, was the descendant and representative of Adam, to attempt to forge a link between this concept and the Son of man of Jewish eschatology, and then to unite them with Jesus' own use of the term,²² is building castles in the air.

The next two considerations concern more closely, by anticipation, Borsch's theme, worked out later in the book, that Jesus, in calling himself the Son of man who laboured here upon earth, suffered death, and was vindicated by exaltation to glory, believed himself to be the historical fulfilment of the myth of the Man who must first suffer in order to reign. Firstly, the Jesus of the gospels speaks both of the Son of man in heaven and of himself as, or as the representative of, that Son of man on earth. But if he is already the Son of man on earth, why must he still suffer, whereas in the ritual pattern suffering was followed by exaltation and enthronement? The answer given by Borsch is that mythologically Jesus had already suffered and been vindicated as Son of man in his baptism; historically the suffering still awaits the Son of man.²³ Secondly, there is the difficulty that at most only *traces* of the idea of the Man's suffering before the attainment of glory are to be found in 'the more normative Judaism' contemporary with Jesus.²⁴ This is met by the hypothesis that the ideas from the old kingship ideologies, especially that of the King-Man's sufferings in the water, had revived to varying degrees in the baptizing sects. Borsch writes:

We are therefore suggesting that the idea of the suffering of the Man was first grasped by Jesus in the context of this baptizing sectarianism. *Probably* it was a conception as much liturgical or liturgical-mythical as anything else. *Perhaps* only one or two of these groups would have actually practised the idea; *perhaps* they taught rather than enacted it [my italics], but we believe that the idea was present and that this stands as one of the links between kingship practice and versions of that ideology which we find in later religious forms. Here is the contemporary basis for the realization that the Man must suffer before salvation and glory can come, the realization which Jesus put to service in historical circumstances.²⁵

Borsch has recourse to a vast amount of material in order to describe what he suggests was the probable background of Jesus' thought. It is highly questionable, however, whether it is possible, out of the bewildering variety of ideas from sources widely diverse in content, provenance, and date, to reconstruct a convincing and coherent mythological pattern. It is still more difficult to understand how an ancient mythological pattern, in the fragmented form Borsch discerns in baptizing sectarian Judaism, could have exerted such a powerful influence on Jesus that he consciously and deliberately regarded himself as acting it out. Later Borsch attempts to show how what he suggests probably happened, did in fact happen.²⁶ He must clearly be included among leading exponents of the view that first-century Judaism was familiar with a Son of man concept which could have influenced Jesus, although, as we have seen, he believes the apocalyptic Son of man was but one form of a much wider complex of ideas.

C. Colpe²⁷

Colpe's authoritative article is of capital importance, and not least for the problem which concerns us in this section. In discussing the religious-historical problem, he reviews the main hypotheses for the ultimately non-Israelite origin of the Son of man concept. Most of these he rejects as inadequate.²⁸ Among them the following may be noted. The Babylonian Adapa, which can only be connected with the Son of man on the baseless assumption that the latter was originally a second Adam, has no eschatological, judicial, or redemptive functions. The gnostic Anthropos (Urmensch) has originally nothing to do with the Jewish apocalyptic Son of man. The latter acts only in the eschaton, not in the present; he acts as judge, and his saving act is not fusion with a part of himself, but acquittal; he remains in heaven, and does not descend to men and ascend again; he is announced by prophetic, apocalyptic writers, and is not represented in the persons of gnosis-bearing prophets. Colpe regards the Canaanite hypothesis as the

most satisfactory, and accepts the view that Dan. 7 reflects the influence of the mythology known from the Ugaritic texts. The fourth beast in Daniel corresponds to the chaos monster, the Son of man to Baal, and the Ancient of Days to the king and creator god El who, after the defeat of the monster, installs Baal as world-ruler.²⁹ Although not containing exactly the same mythology as in Palestine, the Ugaritic texts seem to provide the closest parallel.

Colpe stresses the creativity of Jewish apocalyptic in the development of the Son of man figure. Apart from Dan. 7.27, where a collective interpretation is given, this was always understood in a messianic sense, and later led to the definite form as a title such as we find in the synoptic gospels.³⁰

Under the heading 'The Son of Man in Jewish Apocalyptic', Colpe³¹ not only deals in turn with Dan. 7, the Similitudes of Enoch (1 En. 37-71), and 2 Esdras 13, but also significantly prepares the way for his investigation of the synoptic gospels which follows in the long section on the Son of man in the New Testament.

Daniel 7. In the vision, the point of the comparison of the four beasts representing world powers which have exercised dominion, with the man-like figure to whom is delivered everlasting rule, is the wielding of power rather than representation of a group. Thus the man-like figure is not the representative of a specific people or kingdom, but a symbol of eschatological rule. Messianic ideas are present without this figure being an actual Messiah. The words 'with the clouds of heaven' introduce the whole scene in verses 13f., and this is enacted in the invisible heavenly world, of which the visible clouds are symbolic. In the explanation of the vision, the man-like figure first becomes the representative of the heavenly entourage of God. At a second stage (verse 21) these saints of the Most High are understood not as the heavenly host of angels, but as the pious and loyal Jews of the Maccabaeon age. Thus the one like a son of man becomes the representative of the true Israel. In both cases he is a collective figure, without becoming directly a messiah or redeemer.

1 Enoch 37-71. Colpe subscribes to the view that in the Similitudes³² the term 'son of man' is no more of a messianic title than in Dan. 7, that it describes rather the appearance of the heavenly being, and that its use is based on Dan. 7.13, which is reflected in the first relevant passage, 46.1: 'another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man'. The use of the Ethiopic demonstrative pronouns 'this' or 'that' with 'son of man' as renderings of the Greek definite article is in marked contrast to the non-use of the pronouns in this connection in the Ethiopic translation

of the gospels, and does not imply a titular meaning. Again, the use of three different Ethiopic expressions for Son of man also suggests that in the Greek and Aramaic (or Hebrew) no title was intended.³³

There remain chapters 70 and 71.³⁴ In 70.1 we read: 'And it came to pass after this that his [Enoch's] name during his lifetime was raised aloft to that Son of man and to the Lord of Spirits from amongst those who dwell on the earth.' In agreement with the consensus of opinion Colpe rejects R. H. Charles' alteration of the second person singular pronoun to the third person in 71.14. 'Thou art the Son of man born unto righteousness.'³⁵ This does not mean that Enoch is the incarnated Son of man, as though he had previously come down to earth, nor that there is a mystical identity of the two figures. Rather, Enoch is installed to the office and function of the eschatological Son of man, with perhaps the idea of the metamorphosis of the human Enoch into the heavenly being, the Son of man. This Colpe³⁶ sees as the theology of a Jewish group, which chose as its hero Enoch transported to heaven in the *Urzeit*, and whose head, founder or teacher possibly named himself after him. This Son of man eschatology did not originate among these devotees of Enoch, but was presupposed by them. They believed Enoch was the future Son of man and world judge. This is analogous to early Christian belief in Jesus' eschatological activity as the Son of man.

2 Esdras 13. The vision of the man from the sea, 'something like the figure of a son of man' (verse 3, Syriac text; Latin defective) represents too late a stage in the development of the Son of man to be used as background for the synoptic figure.

The Synoptic Gospels. Colpe prepares to utilize the synoptic material as a quarry for information about the Jewish apocalyptic Son of man, just as he has used the non-Christian materials, for he regards the Jewish sources as inadequate evidence for the background to the synoptic Son of man. There are insufficient resemblances in the Son of man of 1 Enoch to account for the New Testament concept, and the figure in 2 Esdras is too much of a fusion with the political Messiah to be serviceable. Consequently, the Jewish apocalyptic material in these sources does not show the antecedents of the New Testament Son of man in the period 50 B.C. to A.D.50. The oldest strata of the synoptic tradition are to be used as a fourth source for the Jewish concept.³⁷ For this purpose eight texts about the coming Son of man are examined.³⁸ I now summarize Colpe's chief statements about them.

Matt. 24.27, par. Luke 17.24. The mention of the parousia in Matthew is, as is generally agreed, a secondary feature, but the first half of the verse is perhaps older than the Lukan form. On this basis the original meaning would be, 'For as the lightning flashes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will it be with the Son of man in his day.' The Son of man who, like lightning, will be visible to all, is a heavenly saviour, and the saying is authentic.

Matt. 24.37, par. Luke 17.26. The suddenness of the Son of man's appearing will take men unawares like the flood in the days of Noah. The Son of man is himself the judge (not an advocate or accuser) whose judgment begins with his appearing. Apart from the term parousia, the saying is apparently attributed to Jesus.

Luke 17.30. Verses 28–30 are not a mere Lukan imitation of verses 26f. and the announcement of the sudden advent of the Son of man in verse 30 belongs in substance to Jesus' words.

Luke 21.36. Although verses 34–6 may be a secondary composition, the idea of standing before the Son of man may be attributed to Jesus, on the principle that what must be proved is not authenticity, but unauthenticity.

Luke 18.8b: 'but when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?' This is inseparable from the preceding parable of the unjust judge. It refers not to a coming of the Son of man to earth, but to acceptance of Jesus' preaching by men on earth. Will the Son of man, when he appears in the heavenly court, be able to assert that men on earth have confessed him, answered his call to repentance and, like the widow the godless judge, implored God's help? Although in the form of a question, the saying has the same meaning as Luke 17.24, 26, 30 and 21.36, and in substance belongs to Jesus' preaching.

Luke 22.69, parr. Mark 14.62; Matt. 26.64. Colpe regards Luke's form as independent of Mark and as part of his special passion narrative source, and as superior to and older than Mark's version in not having the reference to Dan. 7.13. The judgment scene is an entirely heavenly one, in which the Son of man, seated at God's right hand, shares in the judgment, and so is not merely witness or prosecutor. The only secondary feature is *τοῦ θεοῦ* ('(the power) of God'). The idea of the exaltation of the Son of man is unknown to Jewish apocalyptic, and so the Lukan form of the saying, lacking allusion to Dan. 7.13 and speaking only of the dignity (*Hoheit*) enjoyed by the Son of man, is genuine.