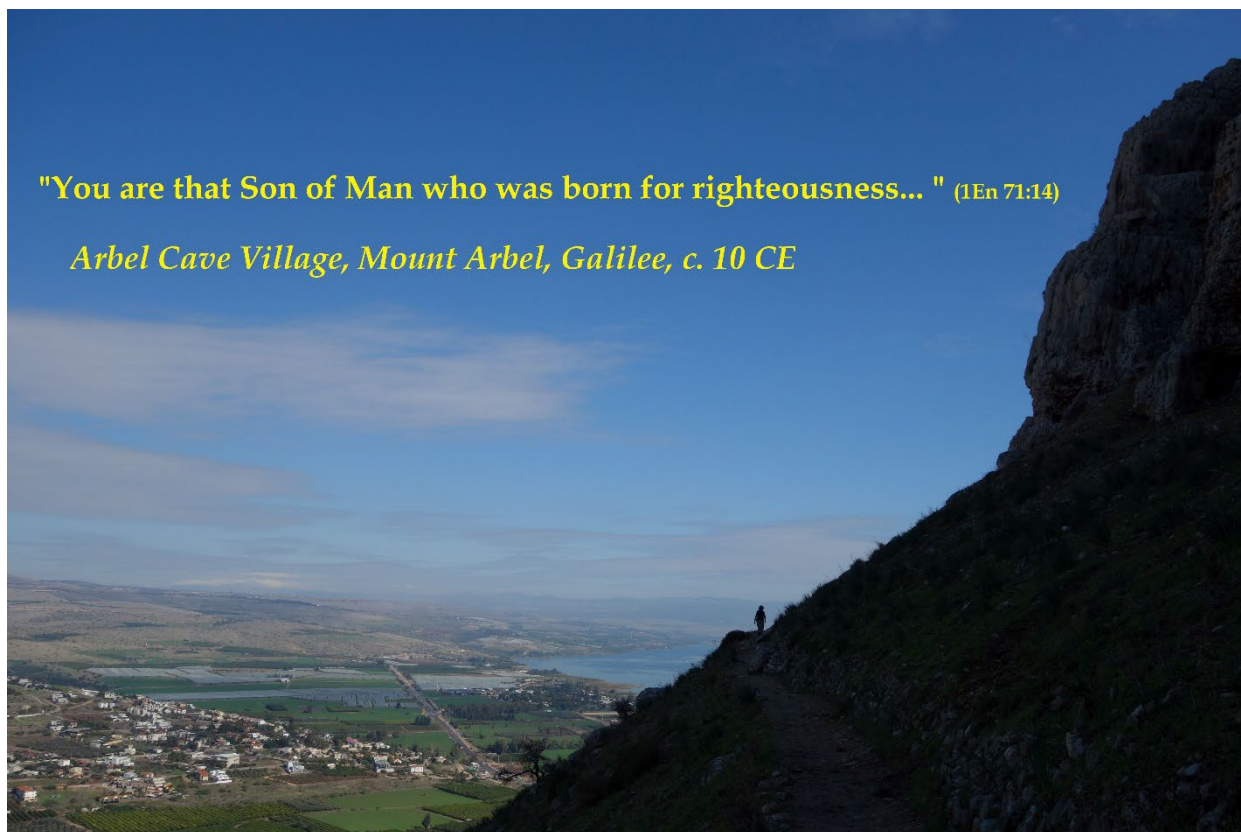


"You are that Son of Man who was born for righteousness... " (1En 71:14)

Arbel Cave Village, Mount Arbel, Galilee, c. 10 CE



Reframing the Son of Man Debate: Jesus not Enoch

Introduction

The 'Son of Man debate' is concerned with the origin and meaning of the term *ho huios tou anthropou* in the New Testament and, since the beginnings of critical scholarship, it has generated a vast amount of literature among scholars. The expression occurs 85 times in the New Testament, and in 81 of these occasions it is found in the Gospels and on the lips of Jesus. This preponderance, combined with the foreignness of the expression in Greek, point to a tradition that attributes the use of this expression uniquely to Jesus, as his preferred self-designation.¹ When used by Jesus, the expression seems to have been understood by listeners, without question, and only once does it generate incomprehension (Jn 12:34). For the rest of the first century, the early Christians used other well-known designations for Jesus ('Son of God', 'Christ', 'Lord', and 'Saviour'), and assiduously avoided 'Son of Man'. Later, in the second century, the expression took on a different meaning, to denote Christ's human, in contrast to his divine, nature.

¹ Lee Martin McDonald, 'The Parables of Enoch in Early Christianity', *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, eds. J. Charlesworth and D. Bock, London: Bloomsbury, 2013; 338, 347. On the basis of the criteria of 'dissimilarity' (the unique use of this title by Jesus himself, but by none of his followers) and 'multiple attestation' (its occurrence in sources of diverse origin), the attribution of this title by Jesus, in reference to himself, is now deemed to be authentic, and as stated above, appears to have been his preferred designation; cf. David deSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James and Jude: What Earliest Christianity Learned from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, Oxford: OUP, 2012; 136-37.

Reframing the Debate

Leslie Walck succinctly sums up the current state of the debate as follows: “The dialogue between Geza Vermes and Joseph Fitzmyer has opened an ongoing debate over whether Son of Man referred to a pre-existing concept from Judaism, or whether it was simply a modest form of self-designation. The critical issue is whether Jesus used it only for himself in an indirect way, or whether he used it with the content of the heavenly figure in mind”.² The heavenly figure most commonly associated with the term ‘Son of Man’ is the one mentioned in book of Daniel (Dn 7,13-14).

The debate has proceeded on the basis that only one side or the other can be accepted, and very few voices have taken the view that the solution lies in a synthesis of both sides. One of these is Seyoon Kim: “Jesus may have used the self-designation with the dual purpose of revealing his identity directly to those who had ears to hear and hiding it from those who had no ears to hear To reveal himself to be the divine figure who was the inclusive representative (or the head) of the eschatological people of God”.³ This view is attractive because it sits comfortably in the context of the ‘messianic secret’, upon which Jesus insisted so strongly (Mt 16:20; Mk 8:30, 9:21). Accepting this view, the central issue can be reframed to enquire why Jesus was so insistent on maintaining the secrecy of his messianic identity, and how the expression ‘Son of Man’ served him for this purpose.

Messianic Secret

Framed in this way, the issue becomes surprisingly simple: Jesus Christ’s ‘messianic secret’ was essential for the continuation and completion of his public ministry. There was not just a need to avoid titles like ‘Messiah’ or ‘Son of David’ because they were laden with expectations foreign to his own mission, although that was true.⁴ More significantly, there were precedents warning Jesus not to declare that he was the Messiah openly, otherwise he would have been reported to the authorities, arrested and executed forthwith by the Romans. His messianic kingdom would not have had time to take root and would have perished along with himself. Not long before, within living memory, a succession of messianic claimants had appeared, but they were all hunted down and executed by the Roman authorities.⁵ In the Gospel of John, it is related how Jesus himself only narrowly escaped such an outcome (Jn 19:19-22). According to the Gospels, the admission of his messianic identity (Mt 26:63-65; Mk 14:61-64) seems to have been the main reason for his crucifixion as ‘King of the Jews’ (Jn 19:19-22). In brief, the ‘messianic secret’ enabled Jesus to continue his mission for sufficient time to establish a loyal following of disciples, who could then publicly proclaim what had previously been a closely guarded secret among them (e.g., Acts 2:36). It was likely to have been this secret, then, that Judas betrayed when he went to the Temple authorities and received his payment (Mt 26:14-16).

² Leslie W. Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, New York/London: Bloomsbury, 2012; 10.

³ Seyoon Kim, *The Son of Man as the Son of God* (WUNT 30, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983; 35-36), quoted by Walck in his *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, 11.

⁴ David deSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James and Jude*, 138.

⁵ Cf. Josephus Flavius, *Antiquities* 17.271-284.

The final part of the problem concerns the way the designation ‘Son of Man’ helped Jesus to maintain his ‘messianic secret’, and this requires a detailed analysis of the expression, starting with its meaning and concluding with its origin.

Son of Man – Meaning

Geza Vermes deserves the credit for defining the meaning of ‘Son of Man’ in its first century Galilean context. It corresponds to the term *bar nash* (indefinite) or *bar nasha* (definite) in Aramaic and according to his philological research these two forms were used interchangeably at the time. As for its meaning, there are two possibilities: 1) either as an impersonal pronoun referring to oneself or to other individuals of the same group, in the same way as one may use ‘one’ in English, ‘on’ in French, or ‘man’ in German, or 2) specifically and exclusively as a circumlocution for oneself, instead of the personal pronoun ‘I’, in situations which call for evasion or equivocation, out of modesty, self-effacement or in the case of Jesus, deliberate ambiguity. In the Gospels, Vermes insists it is used exclusively in the latter sense: “Understood in this meaning, the “son of man” idiom makes full sense and can be applied to all the Gospel passages that display the corresponding Greek phraseology”.⁶

On hearing ‘Son of Man’ (*bar nasha*) spoken by Jesus, an unfamiliar listener would think that he was talking in an impersonal and general way about himself or others, and just leave it at that. On the other hand, a regular listener would realize that he was referring to himself and may then want to know what lay behind his use of this particular expression. This would then bring him, as it brings us today, to the other side of the current debate, which is concerned with the origin of the expression ‘Son of Man’, when used by Jesus as circumlocution for himself. It was this ‘scriptural background’ that was revealed to his closest disciples and, as we noted above, forms the content of the ‘messianic secret’.

Son of Man – Scriptural Origin

The designation ‘Son of Man’ originally derives from the heavenly figure described in Daniel 7:13 as the ‘one like a son of man’ (*ke-bar enosh*), who is given everlasting dominion, glory and kingship over all nations and peoples (Dn 7:14), after the judgment of the wicked kings (Dn 7:9-27). In this vision in Daniel, however, the ‘one like a son of man’ has no messianic role to play, for it is the Almighty who judges and saves his holy people. The ‘one like a son of man’ is presented simply as their heavenly representative, regarded as an exalted angel like Michael. For this reason, many scholars fail to see the connection between Daniel’s heavenly figure and the ‘Son of Man’ in the Gospels.⁷

Son of Man and Messiah

In the Gospels, however, Jesus quotes this very same passage at his trial, to confirm his messianic identity and seal the conviction that led to his crucifixion (Mt 26:63-65; Mk 14:16-64). In an extraordinary development of the original vision in Daniel (Dn 7:13–14), the Gospels contain many other passages relating the ‘Son of Man’ to the role of eschatological Saviour and judge. They have not only turned the descriptive expression ‘one like a son of man’ into the designation ‘Son of Man’, but they have also attributed to this figure the messianic role of divine Saviour and judge, not found in the book of Daniel.

⁶ Geza Vermes, ‘The Son of Man Debate Revisited (1960-2012)’, *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, 2013; 9.

⁷ Summed up by Charles Gieschen, ‘The Importance of the Parables of 1 Enoch for Understanding the Son of Man in the Four Gospels’, *Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism*, Leiden: Brill, 2020, 52.

The messianic development of the heavenly figure in Daniel's vision is not an innovation of the Gospel writers, as once was thought, for the very same messianic attributes are found in the pseudepigraphic Parables of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37-71), widely held to have been composed at the turn of the era (late 1st cent. BCE), just a few years before the public ministry of Jesus.⁸ In the Parables of Enoch, the heavenly figure of Dn 7:13 is enhanced with attributes from Isaiah, Psalms, and Wisdom literature, and assumes the leading role as divine messianic saviour and judge of mankind. Although he is called the 'anointed one' (or 'messiah', 2 times), the 'chosen one' (16 times), and the 'righteous one' (2 times), he is most commonly referred to as "that son of man" and "this son of man" (16 times). The final step in the use of "Son of Man" as a self-designation appears to have been made by Jesus himself, as an innovation understood by very few.⁹ It is highly unlikely that the writers of the Gospels retrofitted Jesus with such a little-known title, when their aim was to proclaim him openly as the divinely chosen Messiah of God (e.g., Acts 2:36).

The Parables of Enoch is therefore the immediate precursor not only to the unique use of the term 'Son of Man' in the New Testament, but also to the linkage of that term with the role of Messiah. Stated simply, to those who knew the messianic prophecy of the Parables of Enoch or were informed by it, 'Son of Man' functioned as an alternative title for Messiah. As such, it perfectly fulfilled the need for a designation that preserved the 'messianic secret', by allowing Jesus' messianic identity to be kept hidden from the masses and revealed only to his closest disciples. However, this situation pertains only if the Parables of Enoch was not widely known among the masses and remained in the possession of the few who supported and gathered around Jesus.

Parables of Enoch – Provenance

This prompts us to consider the origin, or provenance, of the Parables of Enoch. Although it has survived only in the Ethiopian Church, scholars are agreed that it was originally composed in Aramaic, before being translated into Greek and then Ge'ez.¹⁰ While fragments of the Book of Watchers (*1 En* 1–36) and other works composing *1 Enoch* have been found at Qumran, no fragments of the Parables (*1 En* 37–71) have yet been found there. Nevertheless, its content is closely related to that of the Book of Watchers, and its expressions, terminology and dualistic worldview bear a resemblance to the writings of the Qumran sectarians, who are widely held to have been Essenes. Despite a shared interest in the writings ascribed to Enoch, the author of the Parables differed from these sectarians on matters concerning self-segregation, Jerusalem, the temple and halacha. Instead, his work has a non-sectarian worldview and a universal reach, suggesting it was produced by a rival congregation within the same religious movement. Confirmation comes from the inclusion of two lists of rebel angels, with their

⁸ For a comprehensive analysis see Charles Gieschen, 'The Importance of the Parables of *1 Enoch*', 52-65.

⁹ D.S. Russell observes "the Synoptic Gospels indicate that, whereas Jesus frequently used the expression 'Son of Man' with reference to himself, he discouraged the use of this title 'Messiah' throughout the length of his public ministry. This suggests that, at least in those Jewish circles represented by his disciples, there was at that time no obvious association between the two terms. The Davidic Messiah was a concept clearly understood by them; the Son of Man—whatever they may have understood by it—was something altogether different. When Jesus interpreted his messiahship in terms of the Son of Man he was bringing together two concepts hitherto unequated in the thought of popular Judaism", *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London: SCM Press, 1971; 334.

¹⁰ George Nickelsburg and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 37-82*, Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2012; 30-34.

names, in the text of the Parables (*IEn* 69:2-15). These are unique literary compositions whose preservation was linked to an oath taken by new members of the Essene community.¹¹ New members took another oath prohibiting them from revealing doctrines to outsiders,¹² so that writings such as the Parables of Enoch would only have been shared among members and trusted guests (*4Ezra* 14:26,45-48). These two oaths ensured that the recital and circulation of this text were restricted to members and guests of the various Essene communities.

Another prominent feature of the text reinforces the view that it would have had a very limited circulation: it expresses a damning judgment on ‘the kings, the mighty and the landowners’ (*IEn* 38:4-6; 46:4-6; 48:8-9; chs. 62–63). Clearly, if this text had been circulated widely among the general public, the communities promoting it would have faced severe persecution by the powerful elites that were listed for condemnation.

Jesus as Son of Man

The precise way by which Jesus came to identify with ‘that son of man’, in the Parables of Enoch, is not known precisely, although it has often been observed that he had a profound grasp of Essene customs, hermeneutics and worldview, despite the absence of any record of contact with the Essenes of Qumran.¹³ Josephus informs us that selected young men were accepted by Essene communities for two to three years before having to take the oath of membership¹⁴ and, furthermore, that Josephus availed himself of this opportunity to learn about the Essenes when he was 16 years of age (c. 55 CE).¹⁵ It is eminently possible that, as an adolescent, Jesus also joined an Essene community near his home in order to pursue his devotion to Scripture (Lk 2:41-52). The recent discovery of an Essene settlement at the Arbel Cave Village, near the Sea of Galilee, within one day’s walk of Nazareth, strengthens this proposal, especially since the same Arbelite community can be identified as the home of the author of the Parables of Enoch.¹⁶ There is indeed a striking temporal and geographical match between the date and place of the composition of the Parables of Enoch (c. 1 CE), and the age at which Jesus could have visited the community at Mount Arbel (c.10-15 CE) and its proximity to his home in Nazareth.

Enoch as Son of Man

There is one major objection to the arguments sketched above: chapter 71 of the Parables of Enoch describes a scene in which Enoch, the righteous scribe and seer, ascends to the highest heaven and is transformed into ‘that Son of Man’, whom he had previously observed and described in earlier parts of the book (*IEn* 71:13-14). If Enoch had long ago been appointed to this role, according to the apotheosis described in chapter 71, then Jesus would appear to be mistaken in adopting the term ‘Son of Man’ in reference to himself.

¹¹ Josephus Flavius, *Jewish War* 2.142.

¹² Josephus Flavius, *Jewish War* 2.141.

¹³ Cf. Simon J. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes, and Christian Origins: New Light on Ancient Texts and Communities*, Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2018; and on a more popular level, John Bergsma, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity*, New York: Image, 2019.

¹⁴ Josephus Flavius, *Jewish War* 2:137-142 and also 1QS 6:13-23.

¹⁵ Josephus Flavius, *Life* 10-11.

¹⁶ In John Ben-Daniel, *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem: Origins, History and Influence* (Mogilany, Krakow: Enigma Press, 2023), I present historical, archaeological and literary evidence to show that the Arbel Cave Village, near the Sea of Galilee, was settled by an Essene community (chap.1), and that this settlement was also the home of the author of the Parables of Enoch (chap. 4).

There are four ways of approaching this objection: the first is by empirical results, the second is with tradition history, the third is by literary criticism and fourth is by theological discernment.

1. The first approach leads to the overwhelming conviction that Jesus was correct in taking the term Son of Man to himself, because it has passed the test of time and a large proportion of the world's population nowadays identifies him with that messianic title and role. On the contrary, very few people are even aware that Enoch was also appointed to that exalted position. In retrospect, the claim that Enoch be 'that son of man' appears to have been short-lived (see 2 below).

2. The second approach focuses on relevant 'history of traditions' research presented at the Enoch Seminar meeting at Camaldoli, Italy in 2005. By studying the titles and roles of the Patriarch Enoch in the earliest traditions about him and tracing their trajectory up through the centuries to those of his exalted counterpart Metatron of Talmudic times, Andrei Orlov made an important observation on the relation of this trajectory to the profile of Enoch in the Parables of Enoch: "As I researched this transition from Enoch to Metatron, it became more and more clear to me that the roles and titles found in the Book of Parables do not represent a crucial link between the roles and titles of Enoch and the roles and titles of Metatron. Thus a glance at the roles and titles of the seventh antediluvian hero from the point of view of the Metatron tradition, as with the earlier Enochic texts, indicates discontinuity rather than continuity".¹⁷

For William Adler this is Orlov's main finding: "as in other cases, the Book of Parables is the outlier. Elsewhere in 1 Enoch, Enoch is diviner, primeval sage, expert in secrets, scribe mediator, and heavenly priest. And the titles applied to him bear some discernable relationship to at least one of these functions (mainly that of a scribe). In the Book of Parables everything is different. Here the titles "Righteous One," "Anointed One," "Chosen One" and "Son of Man" refer to a preexistent enthroned figure, only ambiguously connected with the Patriarch himself. Unlike the titles found in other parts of 1 Enoch, they do not appear to originate in Mesopotamian tradition. Rather they are connected with motifs from Jewish scriptures. Used almost interchangeably, these titles do not bear any clearly identifiable connection with the roles Enoch plays in the Parables. "The Book of Parables," writes Orlov, "refuses to depict in any way Enoch's participation in various offices that stand behind his titles." Enoch is called "Son of Man" in the Parables, but as Orlov points out, he "in no way attempts to execute the offices pertaining to this and the other titles." Perhaps Orlov's most surprising finding is what he does not find, namely a connection between the Enoch of the Parables and the exalted Enoch found in the later traditions about Enoch-Metatron".¹⁸

For those who claim that chaps. 70-71 of the Parables of Enoch are an integral part of the book, making sense of this "departure from the traditional pattern" is not easy. Adler suggests it represents an attempt to "mainstream" the figure of Enoch by giving him an importance that is closer to known Biblical sources, but then admits that does not seem to have succeeded. The exalted titles attributed to Enoch in the Parables are "dropped almost entirely in the Merkabah tradition", according to Orlov. Adler concludes that "a potentially promising path in the

¹⁷ Andrei Orlov, 'Roles and Titles of the Seventh Antediluvian Hero in the Parables of Enoch: A Departure from the Traditional Pattern', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. G. Boccaccini, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2007; 110-136, quote from 134.

¹⁸ William Adler, 'A Dead End in the Enoch Trajectory: A Response to Andrei Orlov', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 137-142, quote is from 137-38.

“Enoch trajectory” ends up a dead end.”¹⁹ Although neither Orlov nor Adler discuss the alternative conclusion, it does seem to make better sense of their observations: it is that chaps. 70-71 of the Parables of Enoch are not an integral part of the book, but are a later addition, and the figure of Enoch was never intended to receive the titles and roles that are attributed to ‘that son of man’ in the rest of the book. Furthermore, if *IEn* 70:3–71:17 were removed from the Book of Parables, Enoch would return to his traditional role as a scribe of heavenly mysteries, and the Parables could then be readmitted to a place in the “Enoch trajectory”.

3. The literary critical approach has been applied in recent decades by various specialists in the field, most effectively in the studies of Knibb, Nickelsburg and Collins.²⁰ Their literary dissection of the text of the Parables exposes inconsistencies in style and content between chapter 71 and the rest of the Book of Parables, as it has come down to us in the surviving Ge’ez manuscripts. Their works all point to the conclusion that chapter 71 was a later addition, a kind of appendix, to the original document. Without knowing Ge’ez, I must rely on these scholar’s authority and expertise, but nevertheless find their conclusions amply supported by another observation on the incongruity of chapter 71 in its present form.²¹ After an obvious conclusion to the main body of the text written in the third person (*IEn* 70:1-2), thus mirroring the opening verse (*IEn* 37:1), Enoch returns to relate—in the first person—how, at the end of his life, he was finally taken up to the highest heaven, where he undergoes a total transformation to become, incredibly and awkwardly, that same divine ‘son of man’, whom he had seen and described in the previous chapters. However, since there is no explanation how, in his divinely exalted state, he then managed to communicate his heavenly experience back to earth, the reader is left ‘up in the air’ with the impression this whole chapter is an afterthought, artfully composed by another hand.

At the end of his masterful commentary on the Parables of Enoch, Nickelsburg writes: “In conclusion, the three parables and chap. 71 differ from one another in their recasting of material from the Book of Watchers. The three parables and chap. 71 differ from one another in their portrayals of the function of the Son of Man. Finally, some elements of both 70:3-4 and 71:3-4 are best explained as additions to the body of the Parables. If these sections, and especially chap. 71, are additions to the three Parables, there are no grounds for asserting that the “author(s)” and first transmitters of the Parables believed that the Righteous One/ Chosen One, Anointed One / Son of Man was or would be the ancient Patriarch Enoch”.²²

This unavoidable conclusion has not gone unchallenged by scholars intent on demonstrating the integrity and coherence of the text, including chaps. 70–71, but their attempts fall short of explaining and overcoming the awkwardness of the identification between Enoch and the pre-existent son of man at *IEnoch* 71:14.²³

¹⁹ Adler, ‘A Dead End in the Enoch Trajectory’, 142.

²⁰ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 1998; 187-191; *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2010; 196-205; ‘Enoch and the Son of Man: A Response to Sabino Chialà and Helge Kvanvig’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 216-237; Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 320-332; Michael Knibb, ‘The Structure and Composition of the Parables of Enoch’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 62-63; ‘Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls’, *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1995; 170-180.

²¹ I am grateful to George Nickelsburg (*1 Enoch* 2, 322, 331) for this observation.

²² Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 332.

²³ M. Knibb, ‘Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha’, 180.

4. The theological approach to Enoch's apotheosis in chapter 71 of the Parables of Enoch is profound and provides material for further reflection. Without presuming influence one way or the other,²⁴ Daniel Boyarin was struck by the resemblance between the elevation and divinization of Enoch in *1 Enoch* 70-71 and the ascension and glorification of Jesus narrated in the Gospels. Agreeing that chapters 70-71 represent a strand of tradition different from that of the main part of the Book of Parables, Boyarin concludes that the fusion of both parts "helps illuminate the cultural, religious context in which the Gospels were produced".²⁵

Peter Schäfer takes the matter further by stressing that, quite apart from the inconsistencies in style and content between chapter 71 and the rest of the Book of Parables (also known as 'Similitudes'), there is an even more glaring incongruity in its theology: "the Son of Man–Enoch in chapters 70-71 is indeed a human being who becomes God, or rather godlike, but the Son of Man in the main part of the Similitudes is certainly not a God who became human, came down to earth and then returned to heaven. Still, it is precisely the incarnation that is missing in the Similitudes".²⁶

There appears to be a theological void between the divine and pre-existent Son of Man, who manifests himself in a 'theophany' to the human Enoch in *1 Enoch* 37-70, and the human Enoch who supposedly became divinized as 'that Son of Man' in the 'apotheosis' of *1 Enoch* 71. Theologically it is a *non-sequitur*: Enoch cannot become the pre-existent and divine Son of Man, unless the Son of Man first becomes incarnate in his human form. However, this divine 'condescension' is nowhere to be found in the Parables of Enoch, or in any other strand of contemporary Jewish tradition. The only place the innovative concept of 'divine incarnation' is to be found in second temple literature is in the Gospels' account of Jesus Christ, who remains the unique historical incarnation of the Son of Man.

It is therefore highly significant that the author has chosen to adapt the words of Enoch's commissioning in a subtle, almost imperceptible way, to indicate the incarnation has already taken place in him: "You (are) that Son of Man who **was born** for righteousness, and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you" (*1En* 71:14).²⁷ He has clearly modelled this pronouncement on the words of the angel of peace to Enoch in a very similar context, earlier in the text: "This is the son of man who has righteousness, and righteousness dwells with him, and all the treasures of what is hidden he will reveal" (*1En* 46:3).

To affirm that the divine and preexistent "Son of Man was born" was blasphemous to the Jewish mind at that time (cf. Jn 8:58-59), unless the 'incarnation' was, by then, a familiar concept among the hearers and readers. In this case, it is reasonable to suppose that the author was writing after the establishment of the Church and was well acquainted with her proclamation of Jesus Christ's incarnation and divinity. In this early Christian context, it is no coincidence that the author's main concern was that part of Enoch's afterlife that most

²⁴ Even though more and more studies are uncovering the influence of the Book of Parables on various parts of the New Testament, and its sources, it should be said that Boyarin strenuously denies the possibility of influence, going so far as to write "the Gospels are certainly not drawing on the Similitudes...", and "Since there is no reason in the world to think these two texts influenced each other...". *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*, New York: New Press, 2012; 82-95, quotes are from 94 and 95.

²⁵ *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*, 82-95, quote is from 94.

²⁶ *Two Gods in Heaven: Jewish Concepts of God in Antiquity*, Princeton: Princeton Press, 2020; 49-53, quote is from 52.

²⁷ This passage and the next are quoted from the commentary of Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 321. As noted by Nickelsburg in his comments on *1En* 71: 13-14: "The present passage is the only one in the Parables that refers to the Son of Man being "born", *1 Enoch* 2, 328.

resembled the ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ. In other words, his main concern was to describe the ‘divinization’ of Enoch in chap. 71 in such a way as to reassign the role of the ‘Son of Man’ from Jesus Christ to Enoch.

As a result, Enoch’s ‘divinization’ scene (*IEn* 71:9-17) not only represents a divine aggrandizement for Enoch and his followers, but also a direct challenge to those Christians who were attributing the ‘Son of Man’ role to Jesus Christ. With a few hundred carefully chosen words, the account of Enoch’s divinization in chap. 71 refuted the identification of Christ as the ‘Son of Man’, since Enoch had supposedly been appointed to that role long before.

Christian Response

In all likelihood, Christian leaders became aware of this challenge when the Parables of Enoch, originally written by a single author and issued as a separate document,²⁸ was published in the compilation now known as *1 Enoch*, along with several additions and interpolations from other hands. Since the Q source of Matthew’s Gospel shows familiarity with the Noahide interpolations (Mt 24:26-27, 37-39; Lk 17:22-37), the date of the new Enoch corpus would have preceded Matthew’s Gospel by several years.²⁹ Allowing time for editorial work and copying, and taking account of the destruction caused by the first Jewish Revolt (66-70 CE), it would be reasonable to date this ‘new edition’ of *1 Enoch* to the decade before the Jewish Revolt (c. 55-65 CE), which was indeed a time of heightened tension between traditional Judaism and the Early Church—tension that led to the martyrdom of James, the brother of Jesus and head of the Church, in 62 CE. Elsewhere, we have argued that the Christian response was spearheaded by John, the longest surviving apostle and spiritual head of the Universal Church at the end of the first century.³⁰ His response survives in the following four forms:

1. A universal prohibition on the copying and preserving of *1 Enoch* in the mainstream Churches.
2. Replacing the Parables of Enoch by the revelation that John received on the Isle of Patmos and recorded in the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse, c. 95-96).
3. Restricting the use of the title ‘Son of Man’ to the reported speech of Jesus alone, and promoting the use of other divine titles to refer to him. This is particularly evident in the Book of Revelation, where the Danielic ‘one like a son of man’ has completely replaced the Gospels’ ‘Son of Man’ (Rev 1:13; 14:14).
4. Reaffirming in John’s Gospel that Jesus Christ fulfils the roles ascribed to the Son of Man in the Parables, in tacit opposition to the claims made for Enoch (e.g., Jn 3:13; 5:2,27).

As a result of these measures, interest in *1 Enoch* gradually declined. Although the *1 Enoch* corpus disappeared from circulation in the Eastern and Western Churches, it was translated into Greek at an early date and continued to be of interest to Gnostics and heterodox groups in Egypt and North Africa.³¹ In the 4th century, the Ethiopic Church obtained a copy in

²⁸ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 34.

²⁹ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 20, 71.

³⁰ In *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem: Origins, History and Influence*, chap. 5, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Parables of Enoch: John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos’.

³¹ In his *De Cultu Feminarum*, 1.3, written in Carthage, North Africa, c. 200 CE, Tertullian refers specifically to the Parables of Enoch, which implies that he was in possession of a copy of *1 Enoch* that included it. In the early 5th century, St. Augustine of Hippo had to discourage the study of *1 Enoch*, and justify its extra canonical status, perhaps due to its popularity in that part of North Africa (*City of God*, XV.23; XVIII.38).

Egypt and translated it into Ge'ez, in which language it has been copied and preserved up to the present day, as part of the biblical canon of the Ethiopian Church. The Parables of Enoch has not survived in any other textual tradition.

Final Word

If it is agreed that the above account is consistent with the known literary, historical and archaeological facts, we may then take one further step and suggest that not only the description of Enoch's divinization was 'appropriated' from Jesus Christ's ascension and glorification, but also the unique wording of the divinization experience in *IEn* 71:14. If this was the case, the divine words "*You are that Son of Man who was born for righteousness...*" (*IEn* 71:14, cf. 46:3) could be a reflection of the actual words addressed to Jesus, on or soon after he heard the messianic prophecy of the Parables. Understanding Jesus' adoption of the title 'Son of Man' as the result of this divine calling would then explain the force of his radical, or rather 'inborn', identification with 'that son of man' in the Parables of Enoch, and his predilection for using 'Son of Man' as a personal title.

If it sounds too far-fetched to assume that the divine words addressed to Jesus were remembered by the author of chapter 71, then we should imagine what a memorable event it must have been, around 10-15 CE, for the Essene community to learn that one of its young guests had experienced a divine calling of this import, directly related to its own messianic prophecy in the Parables. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, as a member of the same Essene community, the author of chapter 71 became an opponent of the way the early Christian Church was developing in fulfillment of their messianic prophecy (c. 55-65 CE),³² and attempted to impede its progress by adding that final chapter, in which Jesus Christ is replaced by Enoch. The Christian response ensured the Parables of Enoch was eventually removed from every Christian institution, resulting in the loss of this important Christological key,³³ until its rediscovery in Ethiopia in the 18th century. Under these new conditions, even chapter 71, which was written to refute the Church's proclamations, turns out to be a reluctant and somewhat contrary witness to the incarnation, ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ.

John Ben-Daniel,
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³² Essenes were strict observers of the Law and would have been reluctant to admit new converts from paganism without imposing on them every aspect of Jewish Law. Those on the periphery of the Christian movement may even have wanted to separate themselves entirely from the Church, because of the entry of unobservant, uncircumcised, ritually impure pagans. In the mind of such an Essene observer, the act of literary sabotage described above could be justified as an attempt to sever the connection between the Christian community and the Parables of Enoch and restore that prophecy to its rightful Essene custodians.

³³ Several modern scholars have extolled the Parables of Enoch for its significance in understanding the principal elements of Christology. For example, Joel Marcus quips "With apologies to Voltaire, we may say that if the Enochic Son of Man had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him to explain the Son of Man sayings in the Gospel" (*Mark 1-8: A New Testament Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27, New York: Doubleday, 2000, 530). Similarly, Crispin Fletcher-Louis writes that the Enochic Son of Man is "of inestimable significance for the understanding of both the *origins* and the *shape* of "Christological monotheism". On the matter of origins, it offers an obvious and straight-forward explanation of Christ devotion: the earliest Jewish believers worshipped Jesus because they believed he truly was, as he had claimed to be, the (preexistent) Son of Man they had been waiting for" (*Jesus Monotheism, Volume 1. Christological Origins: The Emerging Consensus and Beyond*, Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2015, 180). The quotations of both these authors are taken from Charles Giesen's 'The Importance of the Parables of *1Enoch*', 64-65 and 55 respectively.