

The institutionalization of Jesus' charismatic authority: "Son of Man" as case study¹

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Abstract

This article argues that Jesus used the expression "son of man" not in a titular way, but generically, meaning "humankind". This use of "son of man" developed into a titular usage in which Jesus is identified with "Son of Man". The study shows that Jesus' use of the expression "son of man" should be understood in the context of the "little tradition" which was reinterpreted in terms of the "great tradition" in a titular way. It is argued that this transition from "little tradition" to "great tradition" can be seen as "false attribution". After Jesus' death when his followers reorganized themselves into a cultic community, they gave Jesus the position "founder of the cult". They did this by making use of honorary titles. The use of the title "Son of Man" for Jesus is interpreted in terms of the social theory of the institutionalization of charismatic authority. The focus is on the title "Son of Man" as it appears in legal sayings or church rules, wisdom sayings and prophetic and apocalyptic sayings.

1. "SON OF MAN" – THE INDEFINITE GENERIC FORM AND THE DEFINITE TITULAR FORM

The interests of post-Easter "Christianity" clearly played a role in the transmission of the Jesus tradition from its oral to its written form. Ernst Käsemann (1960:162-185) took it as point of departure for his article, "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie". Käsemann (1960:180, 182, 184) articulates this point of departure as follows:

¹ This article is based on the doctoral dissertation "Institutionalization of authority and titles used for Jesus". This dissertation, with Prof Dr A G van Aarde as supervisor, was submitted and accepted as part of the requirements of the PhD degree (2000), Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria.

Die Apokalyptik ist – da man die Predigt Jesu nicht eigentlich als Theologie bezeichnen kann – die Mutter aller christlichen Theologie gewesen ... Mitte urchristlicher Apokalyptik ist nach der Johannes-Apokalypse wie nach den Synoptikern die Thronbesteigung Gottes und seines Christus als des eschatologischen Menschensohnes, die auch als Erweis der Gerechtigkeit Gottes bezeichnet werden kann ... *Ihr Zentralmotiv war die Hoffnung auf die Epiphanie des zu seiner Inthronisation kommenden Menschensohnes* (my italics).

Rudolf Bultmann's ([1921] 1931:117, 129, 163) rather challenging point of view on the use of the title *Son of Man* is that Jesus used the title *Son of Man* referring prophetically to someone who was still to come and not to himself. The followers of Jesus, however, identified this *Son of Man* figure with Jesus. Norman Perrin (1965-1966:105-155; 1966:17-28), Philip Vielhauer (1975:124-147) and J Dominic Crossan (1991:238-255) argue that Jesus never used "son of man" as a title. However, according to Crossan Jesus did refer to the figure "son of man" mentioned in Daniel 7:11-14, but not as a self-reference. In this passage the expression is not used as a title. Later Jesus' followers also made use of Daniel 7:11-14, but understood "son of man" as a title and identified Jesus with this figure. According to Crossan, the use of the title *Kyrios* as a reference to a coming "apocalyptic judge" (cf Cullmann [1955] 1958:153; Duling & Perrin [1974] 1994:223) by Hellenistic-Judean followers of Jesus facilitated the identification of Jesus *Messiah* with Jesus, *Son of Man*. It is Vielhauer's (1975:124-147) opinion that the earliest Jesus faction in Jerusalem used the title *Son of Man* to describe Jesus on account of their experience of Easter. Perrin's point of view is similar to that of Vielhauer. He also sees the use of the title *Son of Man* as an attempt by Jesus followers to make sense of the death of Jesus. By identifying Jesus with the *Son of Man* the Jesus followers expressed their faith that Jesus was vindicated by his victory over death. Hans Conzelmann's (1969:135-136) evaluation of the evidence shows a somewhat different nuance. He is of the opinion that Jesus did not refer to the figure "son of man" at all. According to Conzelmann, scholars who state that he did (e.g. Sanders 1985, 1993; Boring 1982; Higgins 1980), incorrectly identify Jesus' sayings of the *Kingdom of God*

with sayings on the *Son of Man* in the gospel tradition. The concept “Kingdom of God” and the title *Son of Man* refer to two entirely different matters.

Bultmann’s perspective on Jesus as apocalyptic prophet forms the background of his opinion that Jesus did refer to a “son of man” figure. J D Crossan (1983) in his work on the parables and Leif Vaage (1994) in his work on the Q tradition both concluded, however, that Jesus was not an apocalyptic figure. The Jesus Seminar (see Miller 2000: 1-18; Schmidt 2000:19-38), building on this work, confirmed their results and demonstrated that Jesus’ perspective on the Kingdom of God was that of a present reality and not as a future entity. They illustrated the socio-cultural and socio-political consequences of Jesus’ view on the Kingdom of God as a present reality over against a type of kingdom that is represented and embodied by an emperor.

This study follows the work of Adela Collins (1996:139-158) in her contention that Jesus used the expression “son of man” not in a titular way but generically, meaning “humankind”. Collins clearly indicates how this use of “son of man” developed into a titular usage in which Jesus is identified with *Son of Man*. Collins has not, however, conceded that Jesus conceptualized from an apocalyptic perspective. This study shows that Jesus’ use of the expression “son of man” should be understood in the context of the “little tradition” which was reinterpreted in terms of the “great tradition” in a titular way. The study argues that this transition from “little tradition” to “great tradition” (Fiensy 1991:2; 1999:8 note 16; Redfield 1956:68-84; Scott 1977:16-20) can be seen as *false attribution*, which can be understood against the background of the *dispossession of land* and the *breaking up of the extended family*. The disruption of land and family meant that the lives of peasants were severely affected. The sayings and deeds of Jesus as the “founder” of the “Christian cult” should be understood in the context of peasant culture. Jesus’ sayings and deeds have their oral history within the “little tradition”. After Jesus’ death when his followers reorganized themselves into a cultic community, they gave Jesus the position of “founder of the cult”. This they did by making use of honorary titles. At this stage the “little tradition” was reconceptualized in terms of the “great tradition”.

The Greek idiom used for “son of man” in the gospel tradition is ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. In terms of first century Greek, it could be literally translated as “the son of

the man", meaning nothing more than "*the man's son*". Although it later became an idiom on account of its usage as a title, the expression would not normally be used in Greek. On account of the fact that the phrase is found in Daniel 7:11-14, it has been thought that the Greek phrase might be an incorrect translation of the Hebrew בן האדם (*ben hadam*) or the Aramaic בר נשׂא בר נשׂא (*bar 'noshā/bar' noshā*). Because this expression is rarely found in the definite form in Hebrew or Aramaic, the indefinite forms בן אדם (*ben 'dam*) and בר נשׂ (*bar nosh*) were also investigated. Vermes (1967:310; 1973:160-191) found that the use of the expression in the literature of normative Judaism (Talmud Jerushalmi, targumim and midrashim) can shed light on the meaning of the expression in formative Judaism and in the New Testament. Researchers such as Veilhauer (1975:124-147), Perrin (1965:150-155) and Tödt ([1959] 1965) agree with Vermes and this is also the chosen approach for this study (Fitzmyer [1968:426-427] however disagrees.)

Veilhauer and Tödt found 74 *Son of Man* sayings in the New Testament and one that is relevant in the Gospel of Thomas (cf Schwartz 1986:11-12). Some of the sayings represent a (post-Easter) reflection by *Jesus* on his coming, passion, death and resurrection (cf Bultmann 1931:161-179). Other *Son of Man* sayings are categorized by Bultmann as "legendary sayings": "in denen die Person Jesu eine wesentliche Rolle spielt, und die ich *a parte potiori* Ich-Worte nenne" (Bultmann 1931:163). Collins (1996:145) is of the opinion that these sayings could contain early traditions, but she finds categories (see Bultmann 1931:73) such as "legal sayings and church rules", "wisdom sayings" and "prophetic and apocalyptic sayings" more helpful (Collins 1996: 146-148, 148-151, 151-152). The following discussion of examples from these categories will demonstrate the *institutionalization of charismatic authority*.

2. LEGAL SAYINGS OR CHURCH RULES

According to Bultmann (1931:138-161) two of the 74 *Son of Man* sayings can, in their present form, be categorized as "legal sayings" (*Gesetzesworte*) or "church rules" (*Gemeinderegeln*) (cf Collins 1996:146). One of these *logia* can be found in the story of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 and another in Q 12:10. In Mark this story

also takes the form of a *controversy dialogue*. In the narrative structure of Mark the controversy began when Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum (ἐδίδασκεν) (Mk 1:22). It was a controversy between Jesus and the scribes (οἱ γραμματεῖς) (Mk 1:22) and was caused by Jesus' teaching (ἡ διδαχή). From a social-scientific perspective the controversy can be seen as a challenge-riposte about honour. The dispute is about the nature of Jesus' *authority* (Mk 1:27): "What is this? A new teaching – and with what authority!" (τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο; διδαχὴ καινὴ κατ' ἐξουσίαν). The story of Jesus healing the paralytic (Mk 2:1-12) is, in a way, an extension of this controversy in Capernaum in the narrative structure of Mark (cf Mk 2:1 where it is expressly stated that the healing of the man with the evil spirit also took place in Capernaum). In the second story (Mk 2:1-12) Jesus' honour is expressed with a *title* just as it was in the first story (Mk 1:21-28). In the first story the title is *the Holy One of God* (ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ) (Mk 1:24) and in the second it is *the Son of Man* (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) (Mk 2:10).

In another contribution (Dreyer 2000a:697-722) I compared the *Wurdeprädikation* "the Holy One of God" with the title "Son of the Mighty One" (υἱὸς τοῦ ὑψίστου) in the story of the healing of the Gerasene demonic (Mk 5:1-20). The expression "Holy One" (ὁ ἅγιος) was understood as an acknowledgement that Jesus was a *sage* with divine authority. Such an explanation is congruent with a controversy dialogue. The *Sitz im Leben* of the story of the healing of the Gerasene Demonic (Mk 5:1-20) is not the *conflict* between Jesus' teaching and the teachings of other scribes, but rather the *conflict* between Jesus as *Son of the Mighty One* and the Roman *legion* as the representatives of their gods. The *Sitz im Leben* in which the title *Son of Man* functions in Mark 2:1-12 is also one of conflict. This *legion* is found in Mark 2:10: "But that you may know that *the Son of Man* [ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου] has *authority* [ἐξουσία] on earth to forgive sins He [Jesus] said"

Geza Vermes (1973:163-168) is of the opinion that here "son of man" is an expression of a self-awareness of authority. Jeremias (1967:165 note 9), Fitzmyer (1968: 426-427), Borsch (1967:23 note 4), Colpe (1972:403-404), and Casey (1976:147-154) do not agree, but rather see this as a titular use of *Son of Man*. To me this to be an example of the *institutionalization of charismatic authority*. A development of the tradition can be clearly seen. Firstly, Jesus used the expression "son of man" in a generic way (indefinite

form) (cf Vermes 1967:311-319). It referred to Jesus as a *wisdom teacher* with *charismatic authority*. Traces of this early tradition can be seen in the story of the healing of the man with the evil spirit (Mk 1:21-28). The wisdom teaching of Jesus as charismatic figure subverted the conventional wisdom/order according to which only *priests* had the authority to facilitate reconciliation for people's sins in order to receive forgiveness (see Num 15:25). John the Baptist also circumvented the structures of the temple when he encouraged people to let themselves be baptized in order for their sins to be forgiven (κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν) (Mk 1:4). By using the generic forms *ben 'dam* (בן דם) or *bar nosh* (בר נש) Jesus taught that any person could forgive the sins of another. "In no case is the speaker set off from other human beings as distinctive in any way. If Mark 2:10, therefore, represents an older Semitic saying, it would have meant 'human beings have authority on earth to forgive sins'" (Collins 1996:147). According to Casey (1976:46) the "son of man" in this verse only refers to *healers*. If this were the case, however, John the Baptist who was not a healer, would be excluded from baptizing and forgiving sins. Jesus obviously went along with what John the Baptist did, since he himself came to be baptized (for the authenticity of this story see Funk 1999:11). Colpe (1972:430-431) is of the opinion that the *authority* (ἐξουσία) to forgive sins could only belong to *Jesus*. Such authority would no longer be *auctoritas*, but, on account of its exclusivity, would have become *potestas*. "Power" in this sense of the word indicates *inequality*, in which case *conflict* can be expected. This can be seen in the narrative structure of the Gospel of Mark where the healing of the paralytic is transformed into a controversy dialogue between *scribes*. This *Sitz im Leben* is no longer similar to that of the historical Jesus. In the aftermath of the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, "Christian scribes" find themselves in controversy with "Judean scribes" in Galilee.

In the context of such scribal activity it can be expected that there would be dispute as to the interpretation of Numbers 15:25: "the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the people of Israel, and they shall be forgiven" (RSV). In a post-Easter "Christian" cultic setting it can be expected that Jesus would be presented as the "ultimate priest". Examples from Qumran (11QMelchizedek) indicate that a *royal figure* who is simultaneously represented as the *priest* of "God Most High" was known in the

context of first-century scribal activity (see Kobelski 1981). This theme can also be found in Psalm 110:4b: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” In Mark 12:35-38 Jesus is identified with this royal priestly figure and his *teaching* (ἡ διδασχῆ) (Mk 12:35) is contrasted with that of the *scribes* (οἱ γραμματεῖς) who wear “royal” robes (στολαί) (Mk 12:38) and go around the (Graeco-Roman) *agoras* in order that they could be greeted and receive honour: “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the market-places, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely” (Mk 12:38-40).

This pronouncement of judgement is probably a post-Easter projection back to Jesus of the *conflict* that was experienced in post-Easter times, and was directed at the opponents in their post-Easter situation. Jesus, honoured with the title *Son of Man*, functions as a *judge*. This *power* (*potestas*) of Jesus is already reflected in the story of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12 when Jesus is given the *authority* to forgive sins. We can conclude, therefore, that the use of the title *Son of Man* in Mark 2:10 is an illustration of the *institutionalization of charismatic authority*: Jesus as wisdom teacher subverted conventional wisdom by taking the *power* to forgive sins from the priests and giving this authority to any person (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in an indefinite generic form). In a post-Easter “Christian” cultic setting Jesus was honoured with the title *Son of Man* and the *power* that he took from the priests was given to him as the “ultimate” *king-priest*!

A similar development can be seen in Q 12:10 (another example of a “legal saying” or “church rule” – cf also Käsemann 1954-55:248-260). The development here is also from the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* to a *Sitz im Leben ecclesiae*. It is generally accepted that Luke was more conservative than Matthew in the use of the source material of the second recension of Q (Q³) (see Kloppenborg 2000:88). *Synagogical controversy* (see Lk 12:11) will then more likely be the setting in which the Sayings Gospel Q interpreted the *Son of Man logion* than Matthew’s (apocalyptic) Beelzebub discourse (see Mt 12:22-37). Q 12:10 reads as follows: “And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven”

(NIV). The similar *logion* in Mark (see Mk 3:28-29) does not contain the title *Son of Man*. It is possible that the Marcan *logion* could have been taken from Q² (see Theissen [1989] 1992:206-221; 258-271; Van Aarde 1999:804; *contra* Kloppenborg 2000:80 note 37), while Luke and Matthew made use of Q³. Mark 3:28-29 reads: "All sins and blasphemies will be forgiven *the sons of men* (τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων), as many as they commit; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not have forgiveness forever" (RSV). According to Collins (1996:148) the similar variant in Didache 11:7b is an indication "that the Marcan form is not idiosyncratic". This earlier tradition behind Mark (and Didache) also places the following on the lips of Jesus: "if *a human* sins against *another human*, forgiveness is available ..." (Collins 1996:148; my italics). If this *logion* can be traced back to the formative stratum of the Q tradition, it represents a similar kind of subversive wisdom as discussed earlier: the act of forgiveness is a general human matter and not limited to priests. In the context of Q², and even more so in Q³, it can be expected that this type of teaching would be subjected to the interpretation of the Scriptures since Q² and Q³ (and Mark and Matthew) probably originated in the context of scribal activity and the controversy between "Christian" scribes and Pharisaic scribes. Collins (1996:148) is of the opinion that 1 Samuel 2:25 could have played a role in this regard: "If a man [*ben 'dam*] sins against another man [*ben 'dam*], God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" (RSV). If Mark 3:28-29 reflects an earlier (Q) tradition, the expression "sons of men" was used in the indefinite generic form and not as a titular reference to Jesus. Q³ (= Lk 12:10) which has a *synagogical controversy* as *Sitz im Leben*, draws the *logion* into a context of whether or not Jesus' teaching could be acknowledged. In this context Jesus is honoured with the title *Son of Man*. Casey (1976:147-154; cf 1979:229; Bauckham [1985] 1995:245-255) concludes that the "original" form of the *logion* in Aramaic had "two levels of meaning" (see Collins 1996:148 note 35). According to him the saying refers to sins against people in general in the first place, and in the second place to sins against Jesus as the *Son of Man*. Casey supposes that the Greek translators were unaware of this ambivalence in the Aramaic and interpreted it solely as a reference to Jesus as the *Son of Man*. Collins (1996:148) asks why such a "shift" from the generic use of the expression "son of man" to Jesus as the *Son of Man* would have taken place:

It is possible that Jesus spoke such a saying, using the generic or indefinite Semitic idiom, and that it gave rise to the variants. But this reconstruction leaves unanswered the question why someone who handed on the saying made a shift from speaking about humans or men in general to speaking of Jesus as *the* human or the Son of Man. Was the shift due to a mistake in translation? Did some oral performer or scribe simply not know Hebrew or Aramaic very well? Such an explanation is conceivable, but resorting to it seems desperate, tendentious, or both.

Another possible explanation of the use of the title *Son of Man* in Q³ could be the previously mentioned probability that a subversive wisdom saying of Jesus developed into the *titular false attribution* of honouring (ὁμολογέω) or renouncing (ἀπαρνέομαι) Jesus as *Son of Man* (Lk 12:8). Jesus' generic use of sins against people in general that can be forgiven by God (according to 1 Sam 2:25) is, in the context of scribal activity, applied in such a way that *Son of Man* (as God's "mediator") could forgive sins committed against him (Jesus as the *Son of Man*), but not sins against God (substituted by τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα).

3. WISDOM SAYINGS

Two of the 74 *Son of Man* sayings belong to the category "proverbs" (see Collins 1996:148-151). Bultmann (1931:73) discusses these sayings under the heading *Logien (Jesus als Weisheitslehrer)*. One of them can be found in the Marcan (and parallels) controversy dialogue about Sabbath observance (Mk 2:23-28) and the other is a Q aphorism (Lk 9:58/Mt 8:20). In the controversy dialogue the challenge-riposte between Jesus and the Pharisees is decided with a *Son of Man logion* which is a reference to Scriptures: "The sabbath came into being for the sake of τὸν ἄνθρωπον [*the man*] and not ὁ ἄνθρωπος [*the man*] for the sake of the sabbath; so ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου [*the Son of Man*] is lord [κύριός] even of the sabbath" (Mk 2:27-28); translation by Collins 1996:149; my additions).

Collins (1996:149) describes the *Sitz im Leben* of this saying in the context of the Gospel of Mark as follows: "The controversy dialogue itself probably was composed in a post-Easter situation in which followers of Jesus claimed *his authority* in order to settle disputes over sabbath observance. The *Son of Man* saying, although attached to the

narrative at a relatively late date, *could itself be early, even a saying of Jesus*" (my italics). I choose for the argument that the "indefinite generic form" of the expression "son of man" can be traced back to Jesus, but that the titular use of *Son of Man* in connection with Jesus was false attribution on account of post-Easter scribal activity. This process can be understood in the light of the influence of Easter on the Jesus tradition and also in the light of the process of *institutionalization of charismatic authority* seen against the background of *conflict*.

Collins (1996:149) probably has a point when she says:

If Jesus said something like Mark 2:27-28, using an Aramaic phrase like בן אדם [*bar nosh*], he probably used it in the generic sense. We thus arrive at a point similar to the conclusion of the discussion of the saying about the word spoken against the Son of Man. There is a gap between Jesus' generic use of an Aramaic term and the Gospels' quasi-titular use of a corresponding Greek term.

One of the authentic elements in the life of the historical Jesus was his repudiation of regulations regarding the observance of the sabbath (see Bultmann [1960] 1965:11). It is possible that Jesus based his point of view on the observance of the sabbath on the Genesis motif (Gen 2:2-3). Another possibility is that the scriptural reference to Genesis first appeared when Jesus' teachings were contextualized by scribes in a post-Easter setting with a controversy dialogue as *Sitz im Leben*. Be that as it may, the notion that the sabbath originated at a certain stage of human history, is an allusion to Genesis 2:2-3.

When the story of creation (as told in Gen 2) is remembered, the Greek word for the "first human being" ($\acute{\omicron}\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$) is, at the same time, a generic indication for humanity in general ($\beta\omicron\rho\ \acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\mu$). To be $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ of the sabbath is a reference to God's command in Genesis 1:28 to rule over creation (see Collins 1996:149). Bultmann (1931:112) points out that a similar saying was known to normative Judaism, namely that the sabbath was given for people and not people for the sabbath. It can be deduced, therefore, that the expression that Jesus as *Son of Man* ($\acute{\omicron}\ \upsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\upsilon$) is ruler over the sabbath (Mk 2:27-28) reflects a similar context of scribal activity. In my opinion

this is another instance of the *institutionalization of charismatic authority*. Jesus, the sage, subverted the conventional order regarding the regulations for observing the sabbath. When his followers at a much later stage find themselves in a dispute concerning the Scriptural grounding of Jesus' wisdom, they change Jesus' reference to the "son of man" in the indefinite generic form to a *logion* in which Jesus is honoured with the title *Son of Man*. This titular use of the expression in a conflict situation gives Jesus the *potestas* to be κύριος over the sabbath and to change the regulations according to his wisdom.

Another example of a wisdom saying that underwent a similar process, is Q 9:58: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου has nowhere to lay his head" (translation by Collins 1996:150). An aphorism with similar content can also be found in the Gospel of Thomas (*logion* 86) where it is introduced with the formula: "Jesus said". In Q³ (also used by Luke and Matthew), this *logion* concludes a short narrative (confirmed by the similarity between Matthew and Luke). The *biographical* framework that can be found in Q should be seen as a post-Easter addition to the Q tradition (see Robinson 1971; Burridge 1999:18, 248; Kloppenborg 2000:344). Here, too, there is evidence of an earlier Jesus tradition, also indicated by the parallel in the Gospel of Thomas. Multiple independent witnesses confirm the authenticity of the Jesus *logion* (see Funk 1999:23) which was later placed in a biographical framework. The uncomplicated introduction to the *logion* in Thomas 86 indicates an earlier aphoristic form.

Bultmann (for the Greek, see Bultmann 1931:102 note 2) points out a parallel saying in Plutarch's *Life of Tiberius*. It is a speech about land reform which argues that soldiers of the emperor had the right to receive land that was taken from others. Tiberius was the emperor when the teachings of the historical Jesus were heard. Fiensy (1991:21-73; cf Kippenberg 1978; Crossan 1998:153-157) argued the relevance of the issue of the dispossession of land for the understanding of the conflict between the peasants and the élite. Tiberius declared: "The wild beasts inhabiting Italy have holes, their places of rest and refuge, but those who fight and die for Italy have no share in it except air and light and are forced to wander unsettled with their wives and children" (see Collins 1996:150). This saying of Tiberius was probably well-known among the peasants during the time of

Jesus. Antagonism towards Roman and Herodian authorities on account of the dispossession of land and the resulting disintegration of families, was to be expected (see Fiensy 1991:21). One cannot know whether Jesus had the saying of Tiberius in mind, however. It is possible that a similar wisdom saying of Jesus could have been taken over in the Q tradition and only later, when placed in a biographical context, made to resonate with the saying of Tiberius. Bultmann (1931:102) is of the opinion that the Jesus saying reflected a type of folk-pessimism, such as for example Job 3:25-26 and Ecclesiastes 3:19. The latter reads as follows: "For the fate of the *sons of men* and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity" (RSV – my italics).

This wisdom saying subverts the conventional wisdom that human beings were given a higher position in the hierarchy than animals in the order of creation. Another reason for this higher position, according to conventional wisdom, is that human beings find meaningful existence in diadic relationships with other relatives in a household. "Subversive wisdom" could be expected from the historical Jesus who was a wandering sage without family ties. According to Collins (1996:150) the following wisdom saying from Job 3:25-26 can be seen as a reflection of the kind of wisdom that can be expected from Jesus: "For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; *I have no rest*; but trouble comes" (RSV – my italics). The version of Thomas 86 of this Jesus saying is: "But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head *and rest*." The version in Q 9:58 ("Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the *Son of Man* [ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου] has nowhere to lay his head") suggests a differentiation between human beings and animals.

A development can clearly be traced from a wisdom saying in which Jesus as *charismatic figure* refers to *humanity* in general, to Q³ which identifies the *Son of Man* with Jesus. Possibly Q² already contained this transition, but if so, the tradition was either unknown to Mark or he chose not to take it over. It is possible that such a tradition could have been transmitted and interpreted in various ways during the process of the development of the tradition. Collins (1996:150) formulates it as follows: "Such folk pessimism could easily be adapted to a philosophically dualistic, apocalyptic or gnostic perspective, in which humanity has no home or rest in this world, but does find such in

the heavenly world.” It is also possible that this tradition could have been taken over in circumstances where poverty was the result of, among other things, the dispossession of land and where the disintegration of families could have been a dire problem. A comparison could be drawn between the saying of Jesus (the “little tradition” of the peasant culture) and the saying of Tiberius. In the formative stratum of the Q tradition themes such as poverty, discipleship and Jesus’ vision of an alternate kingdom were integrated (see Jacobson 1992:50). As Jesus sayings became further removed from the “little tradition” and were increasingly domesticated in the “great tradition” of school, temple and scribal activity, the attribution of *titles* to Jesus is to be expected. This is probably what happened with the saying in Q 9:58.

In a discussion of the history of the Q traditions (see Dreyer 2000b), I argued that Q² originated in a context of *conflict* with the Second Temple ideology and Q³ in the Galilean/Syrian region in a more Hellenistic context after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. At this stage of the tradition history the Q community defines its own identity and orientation as “wandering itinerants” (cf Crossan 1997:21-53). At this time opposing Judean oriented scribes in places such as Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin were also judged by means of apocalyptic woes (see Lk 10:13-15). It is therefore understandable that Jesus sayings about, for example, *discipleship*, were associated with *homeless itinerancy*. By drawing Jesus into their context they gave their own ideology greater authority. By reinterpreting the *logia* of Jesus as though the *Son of Man* said them, they anticipated their own vindication. After all, it would be the victorious *Son of Man* figure who would eventually triumph over suffering and judge the “enemies”.

Luke took over this Q³ tradition and gave it a functional position at the beginning of his travel narrative (Lk 9:51-19:44). *Imitatio Jesu* is the theme with which Luke calls upon the followers of Jesus to travel with him to Jerusalem. The disciples are asked to count the cost of their discipleship (see Lk 9:57-62; 14:25-35). It could be that his fate would become their fate: “As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ Jesus replied: ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but *the Son of Man* has no place to lay his head’” (NIV – my italics).

In any case, if the saying goes back to Jesus, it most likely referred to human beings in general, or to Jesus’ experience as typical of humanity. At some point, the

reference to the generic human being was transformed into a reference to Jesus as a particular individual who is without an abode for a specific reason: his sense of vocation, a lifestyle which was a prophetic symbolic action, or the result of hostility to his person or work. At the latest, this transformation occurred when the saying was placed in a pronouncement story concerning discipleship, such as the one preserved in Q. In this context, the life of the disciple is to be homeless in imitation of Jesus' life (Collins 1996:150-151).

4. PROPHETIC AND APOCALYPTIC SAYINGS

Sixteen of the 74 *Son of Man* sayings in the gospel tradition belong to the group of "prophetic and apocalyptic sayings" (Collins 1996:151). "Four of these could well have been formulated by the author of the Gospel in which they appear; three by Matthew (16:28; 24:30a; 25:31) and one by Luke (17:22). Another four are older than the Gospels in which they appear, but are probably post-Easter formulations (Mt 10:23; Mk 14:21 par; Lk 6:22; 21:36). The origin of the remaining eight is ambiguous" (Collins 1996:151). According to Bultmann (1931:117, 129, 163) some of the "prophetic and apocalyptic" *Son of Man* sayings could have originated with Jesus, for instance Luke 12:8-9; Mark 8:38 par.; Matthew 24:27 par. Bultmann (1931:163) is uncertain whether Matthew 24:37-39 par. and 24:43-44 par. should be included. It has been posited earlier that Bultmann ([1949] 1956:90-110) saw these *logia* of Jesus as a "prophet" referring to someone else as the *apocalyptic Son of Man*, while Jesus' followers identified him with the *Son of Man* figure. This can especially be seen in Mark 8:38 par. and Luke 12:8-9.

The discussion of Luke 12:10 as a Q tradition argued that Jesus probably did not have the title *Son of Man* in mind for himself, but that the later Q tradition attributed "titular authority" to Jesus. When Luke took over Q 12:10 and added verses 8-9 as introduction, he took it for granted that Jesus was *the Son of Man*. The titular references to the *Son of Man* in Luke 12:8-9 need not be traced back to Jesus. They could simply be the addition of the evangelist. A similar case can be argued for Mark 8:38. Vielhauer (1975:124-147) sees no convincing argument either for or against any of the titular references to the *Son of Man* originating with Jesus. Such an argument does not take the

indefinite generic form of some “son of man” references as possibly authentic Jesus sayings, into account.

I agree that there is no strong argument for Jesus using the title *Son of Man* in his “little tradition”. On the other hand, seeing the “prophetic and apocalyptic” sayings as articulation of the “great tradition” and as examples of the *institutionalization of Jesus’ charismatic authority*, provides a sociological explanation for the *conflict* situation of the post-Easter followers of Jesus. This is the case especially when the use of “Christological titles” for Jesus is *demystified* from a postmodern perspective. The title of Ragnar Leivestad’s (1968) article, “Der apokalyptische Menschensohn: Ein theologisches Phantom” is rather telling, but to see no “grounds” in the Jesus tradition why the post-Easter followers of Jesus institutionalized his *charismatic authority*, is taking the argument too far. It is possible to argue that ‘n similar process could have taken place in the Judean-Hellenistic context where the expression *Son of Man* could have been used as a title (cf Casey’s 1976 discussion of the use of “Son of Man” in the Similitudes of Enoch). It would, however, lie beyond the scope of this study. “It is well known that the community at Qumran and at least some early followers of Jesus believed that the scriptures were written for *their* benefit and prophesied events which *they* were experiencing and other events *they* expected to occur in the near future” (Collins 1996:154 – my italics).

The early followers of Jesus believed that his authority which they acknowledged, came from God. The *Son of Man* title is expression of the belief that he would appear on the clouds along with holy angels: “he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels” (Mk 8:38b). The process of the *institutionalization of charismatic authority* was not limited to Jesus, however. It also happened with other figures, such as Moses. An author of tragedies called Ezekiel (c. 200 BCE) (see Snell 1971:1.292) writing about the Exodus, described a dream of Moses. He saw a “man” sitting on a throne on Mount Sinai. This man beckoned to Moses and gave him a crown and a sceptre after which he disappeared from the scene. Moses’ authority was institutionalized by God and the place of God as acting subject was taken by the “institute”. This is similar to what happened when Jesus became *Son of Man* on account of God’s intervention when Jesus triumphed over death by means of the resurrection.

5. "SON OF MAN" – A SYMBOL OF POWER

At the end of her investigation of the *Son of Man* traditions Adela Collins (1996:157) asks the question as to the significance of the study for a contemporary understanding of the historical Jesus. Her conclusion is the following:

First of all, such a study gives specific content to the affirmation that Jesus was fully human. It demonstrates how Jesus was fully conditioned by the culture and thought-world of his time. It reminds us to let Jesus be a stranger to us and not to cast an image of him in our own cultural likeness and theological preference. But we need not stop there and forget him as utterly foreign to our categories of thought and concerns. We can struggle to appreciate the particularity of his teaching in its circumstances, the options chosen, the options rejected, and attempt to discern the intention, the function, and the effects of his teaching about that Son of Man.

Belief in and hope for the future activity of a heavenly being appear to some moderns and post-moderns as a failure to work with the realities of politics and history, or as the wishful thinking of the powerless. Such is a hasty judgment based on modern preferences. It is important to note that the Son of Man is in fact a powerful political symbol. This figure is not a fantasy cut off from the real world, but a *symbol of a specific way of being, living, and hoping embodied by Jesus and his followers*. The Son of Man is *an alternative to other symbols of authority*, such as the Roman emperor and his agents, the heirs of Herod the Great, and the messianic pretenders who attempted to overthrow Roman rule by force. Jesus' teaching in this regard was similar to that of the book of Daniel, the Qumran community, the *Assumption of Moses*, certain teachers and prophets described by Josephus, and the book of Revelation. None of these advocated violence. Yet none was content with accommodation to the status quo. All called for resistance to the current unjust order by creating an

alternative symbolic universe which sustained an alternative way of life.

(Collins 1996:157-158 – my italics)

According to Collins there is a notable resemblance between Jesus and his followers on the matter of “resistance to the current unjust order”. Both represent “an alternative symbolic universe”: they have “other symbols of authority”, namely a choice for God’s alternate kingdom rather than the emperor’s kingdom. Jesus’ authority lay not in coercive power, not in *potestas*, but in *auctoritas*. “Normative power” (*auctoritas*) is the power on which religion relies, whereas “political power” (*potestas*) tends to make use of force. The gospel tradition portrays Jesus as someone who came into conflict with the power of both the religious and the political systems. However, because of the process of the institutionalization of his charismatic authority, Jesus was venerated as a “priestly king”.

According to Anthony Thiselton (1994:463), there is a definite resemblance between the “state of affairs about the identity, role, and authority of Jesus” and the “illocutionary” statements his followers made about him (see Dreyer 2000a:697-722). In the opinion of Thiselton this “resemblance” between Jesus and his followers should not be interpreted as “causal force”: “[T]he performing of acts on the basis of *causal force* constitutes in essence an *act of power through self-assertion*. On the other hand, illocutionary acts which rest on institutional roles serve the purpose as *acts which point by implication away from the self to some source of authority which lies beyond the self alone*” (Thiselton 1994:463). Calling in the support of Immanuel Kant, Thiselton (1994:456) assumes that “some source of authority” refers to God and that Jesus *and* his followers were in accord on this. However, in Part one of this study I argued (Dreyer 2000a:706):

When it is forgotten that human beings create their social world, systematize and institutionalize, then institutions are be *reified*. Then the institutions are seen as a given reality beyond human control. The result is that power interests become camouflaged and ideology “naturalized”. A process of

demystification, that is a deconstructive reading or "denaturalisation", can expose these power interests.

All cults, including the "Christian cult", need officials to preside in their cultic activities. Cultic officials in the ἐκκλησία facilitated the people's participation in cultic activities. Similarly, scribes were needed in the "Christian" cult as in other cults. Their task was to interpret the holy writings and to codify the cultic activity. The cultic hero was given the position of ultimate "law-giver" and "priest" and the position of the officials was that of representatives of the cultic hero, law-givers and priests. Names were given both to the cultic hero and to the representatives in order to express these functions. Positions, names and functions were based on the sayings and deeds of the "founder" of the cult. In historical Jesus research this has been called "false attribution".

In my discussion on false attribution the following elements were identified:

The process of false attribution occurred against the background of the dispossession of land and the distortion of families.

- The sayings and deeds of the Jesus as the "founder" of the "Christian cult" were originally transmitted in a peasant culture that conceptualized the world in terms of the "little tradition" (using concepts from agrarian society and not concepts of the ruling classes – see Fiensy 1991:2; 1999:8 note 16; Redfield 1956:68-84; Scott 1977:16-20).
- The "little tradition" was domesticated by scribes who conceptualized their world in terms of the "great tradition" (using terminology of schools, temples and empires – Fiensy 1991:2; 1999:8 note 16; Redfield 1956:68-84; Scott 1977:16-20).
- This "domestication" of the Jesus tradition relates to the crossing of the boundaries between in-group and out-group (horizontal boundaries – see Theissen [1999] 1999:81) and those between higher status positions and lower ones (vertical boundaries – Theissen 1999:81).
- *Würdeprädikationen* used for Jesus, are terms that originated in the "great tradition" and were used to express the "little tradition".

The potential conflict inherent in early Christian scribal activity can be illustrated by means of a study of the Christological honorary titles (*Würdeprädikation*). The use of titles for Jesus (“great tradition”) is grounded in the words and deeds of Jesus that were originally spoken, performed and transmitted in terms of the peasant culture (“little tradition”). The difference between the interests of the “great tradition” and “little tradition” can also become clear when the titles of Jesus are studied. Focusing on the title *Son of Man*, this study argues that:

- seen from a diachronic perspective, the use of the title *Son of Man* indicates an ideological conflict between the “great tradition” and the “little tradition”;
- both the conflict between the “great tradition” and the “little tradition” and that between Jesus and the Jesus followers can be explained sociologically by interpreting this *conflict* in terms of conflict theory and the social theory of the institutionalization of charismatic authority.

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