

Recent Discussions on the Meaning of the Title 'Son of Man.'

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BALDENSPERGER, in two articles on this subject in the *Theologische Rundschau* for June and July 1900, is of opinion that the results of the investigations of different scholars go so far apart that we seem further than ever removed from general agreement. Some progress, however, is being made, and he marks out stages in this progress.

At first, exegetical study of N.T. passages was the principal feature, and the results varied according to the exegete's conception of Jesus' person; reference to the passage in Daniel was rare. The name was the outward emblem of Jesus' secret aims: 'The Master, venerated by His followers as the Jewish Messiah, wished by it to describe Himself as in some sense belonging to the human family, as the ideal man, as a lowly human being, or the like.' This is called by Baldensperger the *exegetical and critical* stage.

About twenty years ago a new phase of the investigation began. A more thorough conception of the title was to be reached by going back to Daniel and Jewish literature of the same kind; a view founded thus on the ideas of the time would be free from arbitrary notions. An old theologian (Weisse) had thought that to go to Daniel was an assault on the originality of Jesus; now it was held that this very procedure would lead to the discovery of the authentic thought of Jesus. The debate now went outside the literature of the N.T. and discussed the presence of the title in the Jewish apocalyptic literature and its Messianic meaning there. Attention was drawn to the Messianic and *eo ipso* eschatological sense of the name in the Gospels (e.g. its use in the passages about the Parousia). Was there a continuity between the Jewish apocalyptic usage and that in the N.T.? But then Jesus could hardly have used the title in the extravagant meaning of Jewish Apocalypse. Some scholars weakened more or less the apocalyptic sense. Besides, the usage in the Gospels was peculiar and puzzling, and many desired to find an interpretation more available for modern faith. The name was still a riddle. Some found a claim in it; the personage thus described

belonged to the future after the Ascension; some even reached in this way the old conception of the heavenly ideal man. Thus 'the current which started from Daniel was crossed and checked by an undercurrent created by Jesus.' Some suggested that the apocalyptic idea of the word reappeared in the Christian community and its gospel literature, and was not in the mind of Jesus at all. This is the *historical and psychological* stage.

Next comes the third stage, the 'Aramaic,' which is called the *philological and linguistic*: the title is translated into the mother tongue of Jesus, and the meaning of this original investigated. Wellhausen and Eerdmans (1894) give the name in Aramaic as *barnash* (*barnasha*). This means simply 'man,' and so, according to Wellhausen, Jesus called Himself 'the man.' The Dutch scholar held that the title could not possibly mean 'Messiah,' especially as it did not exist in the Jewish apocalyptic in this sense. Jesus did not claim Messiahship, and by this name hinted in opposition to the Messianic expectations around Him, that He was only a man. The Greek translation, $\delta \nu\acute{\iota}\delta\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omicron\upsilon$, is the cause of the Aramaic expression being wrongly taken as a Messianic title. So began the linguistic attempts. 'Investigation of the original words used by Jesus was now in the air, and was soon to ripen further researches.'

A. Meyer in his book, *Die Muttersprache Jesu* (1896), aims to discover the actual dialect spoken by Jesus. This dialect is West-Aramaic-Galilean. Now retractions from Greek, especially where the idiom in the Gospels is not Greek, might lead to the real sense, and the expression 'Son of Man' is treated in this way by Meyer. He rejects the meaning given by Wellhausen, because the hearers of Jesus could not tell whether He meant by it Himself or man generally. *Barnash* is used in different senses: = 'man in general,' Mk 2²⁸, Mt 12³²; = 'I' (distinguished from other living creatures), Mt 8²⁰; = 'anyone,' Mt 11¹⁹. It is not a title at all, and the meaning of Jesus is to be

found in the context in each case. Thus a number of passages lose any apocalyptic meaning. But Meyer has not disposed of the great mass of the passages, the sayings about the Parousia and the prophecies of the sufferings of the Son of Man. And the investigation of the Aramaic use of *barnash* was not thorough enough, e.g. the examples quoted for *barnash* = 'I,' seemed only emphatic idioms of rare occurrence.

Lietzmann in his book, *Der Menschensohn* (1896), attempts to go through the entire Aramaic material, and thus discover out of these sources the meaning of *barnash* in all its different acceptations. His result is that the formula was not usual in Judæan Aramaic, but in Galilean was the word most used for 'man,' not a definite man nor the genus man, but a colourless expression for individual man. Like 'son of' in all Semitic languages, *bar* in Aramaic is used to make plain something relating to the subject, and if the word in the genitive is a person, it is quite pleonastic; e.g. son of the ungodly = the ungodly.

Wellhausen in 1899 replies to Meyer and Lietzmann. He thinks *barnash* is not peculiarly Galilean, but belongs to all Aramaic dialects in sense of ὁ ἄνθρωπος, and *bar* is not pleonastic, for *nash* is a collective (= people) which *bar* individualizes. Jesus, then, speaking Aramaic could not make any distinction between 'the man' and 'the son of man.'

Could Jesus apply such a name to Himself? If it means the true man, Jesus was not a Greek philosopher nor a humanist, and not likely to make a speculation about the true humanity the centre of His teaching. Why, if so, is the name not used always, and why, for the most part, only in Messianic passages? It cannot mean 'a man like any other,' for in the apocalyptic passages Jesus alone is referred to. The expression, indeed, is so unnatural and incomprehensible that, to use Wellhausen's phrase, the people 'would take Jesus for possessed.' Was no one found to inquire the reason of this strange procedure of Jesus? There is no trace of such in the Gospels. Hence, if the Aramaic expression in its true sense is incompatible with Jesus' use of the phrase, and, besides, cannot mean 'the Messiah,' as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου certainly does in the majority of places, then Jesus cannot have applied this title to Himself, because such a title did not exist at all in Aramaic. Thus Lietzmann infers that Jesus never used the name

Son of Man, and Wellhausen in 1899 agrees with him.

A strange conclusion! We began to investigate the meaning of the phrase, assured that thereby we should discover the central meaning of the person of Jesus, and we reach the result that Jesus had nothing to do with it. Again, Aramaic study was to put an end to the subtleties founded on the Greek expression; now it is indeed agreed that *barnash* cannot mean the Messiah, but as to its actual positive meaning Meyer criticises Wellhausen, Lietzmann criticises Meyer, and Wellhausen both. Thus the ambiguity of *barnash* bids fair to equal that of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Here Baldensperger permits himself a doubtful jest. All these attempts to locate the Son of Man have brought about the conclusion that whether the passages about the Son of Man are genuine or not, there is a profound truth in the saying that the Son of Man has no home or resting-place.

The results reached through the Aramaic are now brought into harmony with passages in the Jewish Apocalypses which mention the Son of Man (Daniel, Enoch, 4 Ezra). Here, Baldensperger thinks, too strict demands are made upon these clumsy Apocalypses. The strange turns and the elasticity of the Jewish and the early Christian exegesis are forgotten. The figurative sense in Daniel, and the use of the comparative particle 'like' ('one like a son of man,') are insisted on. In Enoch the passages containing the name are not indeed *en masse* treated as Christian interpolations (as by Bousset; not so Beer in Kautzsch's *Pseudepigraphen*), but Lietzmann and Wellhausen lay stress on the fact that the pronoun 'this' or 'that' generally precedes, hence it is not a title and not the same as Messiah. 4 Ezra, which speaks of Messiah rising out of the sea like the form of a man, goes back to Daniel, and we are to note (they tell us) that he gives the correct translation 'man,' not 'son of man.' But all minute points of this kind leave out of view the positive tendencies of this literature. Enoch and 4 Ezra make plain references to Dn 7, and allude to the details in that picture without naming the old familiar source; this surely shows how much reflection there was about the 'One beside the Ancient of Days with the appearance of a Son of Man.' The transition to use as a title is not indeed complete in Enoch, but it is on the way, and our logic must not regulate the process. If, as these

scholars imply, the early Christian apocalyptic writers who stand close to Judaism were able to make the phrase into a title, this surely proves what was possible for purely Jewish circles. Again, why speak of Messiah as 'the man' in face and form (the same could be said of the angels and other persons in the context), unless some particular man, the special man of Daniel, is meant? Here we have what is almost a title (cf. the use of 'the elect one' of Messiah in Enoch). If the transition is not complete in Enoch, there is still room for development in the days of Jesus. It is very probable that other Apocalypses, and these with more advanced Messianic conceptions, existed. And the interpolations in the similitudes of Enoch (unless these are certainly Christian) give us information about this development.

We are next pointed to the fact that except in the Gospels the title is not found in the Christian literature. But, not to speak of Ac 7⁵⁶, which goes along with the Third Gospel, this is not so certain. The Apocalypse 1¹³ 14¹⁴ (we are told) uses the name as Daniel does, though plainly referring to Jesus the Messiah; but the writer speaks there as an apocalyptic seer, and keeps strictly to the turns of phrase in the pattern Apocalypse. Hebrews refers to Ps 8 (Son of Man), and Paul, also, in 1 Co 15²⁷, where he combines it with Ps 110, certainly considered Messianic. Paul, indeed, speaks of the heavenly man, when we should expect him to use the name Son of Man; perhaps he thought the former more suitable. At any rate the *argumentum ex silentio* is a doubtful one; and arguments based on the mere use of a word lead to strange results, as, e.g., if we should make inferences from the subordinate rôle of the kingdom of God in Paul to the teaching of Jesus on this subject.

All that precedes, according to Baldensperger, both the argumentation and the Aramaic researches, touches only the periphery of the problem. As regards the Aramaic question, it has now been practically settled by Dalman in his book, *Die Worte Jesu* (1898), in which there is a chapter on the Son of Man. This great Aramaist calls the view of Wellhausen and the others, that the Aramaic for 'man' can only be 'son of man' (which is hence an impossible title in Jesus' mouth), a serious error. Jewish Aramaic of older date uses *anash* for 'man'; the singular *barnash* was unusual and an imitation of the Hebrew *ben adam*,

which again is rare, and, in the apocryphal literature, used only in allusion to the O.T. passages. The Galilean of Jesus' time was no exception. Only at a later date was *barnash* used as = man. In Dn 7¹³ we have no prosaic idiom, but a phrase of the same character as the 'Ancient of Days,' and one that might readily become a title. With the article it means 'the son of man' not 'the man.' The strangeness of the expression is brought out in the strange Greek, *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, with double article. Dalman also shows that the Jews had the usage where a speaker speaks of himself in the third person. It would not seem strange to His hearers that Jesus should do so. Further, Dalman considers it a great illusion to suppose that by a linguistic argument the Messiahship of Jesus, which has so many roots in the original Christian soil, can be got rid of. Even if we had clearer knowledge of the linguistic facts of Jesus' time, we should need always to exercise reserve on this point. Might not, for instance, the language of religion have differed often from the language of everyday life? Must Jesus have always used Aramaic expressions even when the holy things of the O.T. were discussed? In regard to the title in question, Dalman holds that Jesus has put His own stamp on it though there are preparations for His use of it in Jewish Apocalypses. He describes Himself by it as the child of man, who is by nature weak, but whom God wills to make Lord of the world. It is not a title expressive of glory, but a declaration of humiliation.

There still remain the passages about the Parousia, which are not sufficiently considered by Dalman. These were the first, in Wellhausen's view, in which Jesus was made to name Himself Son of Man. Linguistic grounds led Wellhausen to use his critical knife on all these passages. If the linguistic grounds fall away, and Dalman's authority as an Aramaic scholar settles that point, what then? Indeed, how in any case were they smuggled into the Gospel tradition and not into eschatological passages alone, but into others as well?

The impression left by the whole debate, concludes Baldensperger, is that in the last resort the decision of the question still depends on each man's total conception of the Person and Work of Jesus. Are we to understand the Messiahship of Jesus as an actual historical fact, the corner-stone of His inner life, or only as a mere accident?

Interpretations which weaken the sense of the phrase 'son of man' will find a ready hearing with those who lay the chief weight on 'rational' motives. The Aramaic solution owes its rapid growth and popularity to the rationalistic leaven which still works on in the theological world. Lietzmann will not identify the problem of the Son of Man with that of the Messiahship, but if the former is unhistorical, such a shock is given to the Messianic position of the Gospels that it amounts to a practical annihilation of it. A last point: Did Jesus, besides the special Messianic reference to Himself, mean to imply prerogatives which have force for all men? Lagarde once thus formulated it: "'Man" is with Indo-Germans a word of honour, with Semites a word of blame.' When he added that Jesus ennobled it, he only characterized himself thereby as an Indo-German. In Jesus' view, there is for man only one goal: to be a child of God, or perfect as the Father in heaven.

To the above we may add a short account of an independent and, it seems to us, successful study which has appeared since Baldensperger wrote his articles.¹ Fiebig does not think that Dalman has settled the Aramaic question, and complains that he does not give a clear statement of the linguistic evidence. He has himself searched through all the relevant Aramaic literature, and the most valuable part of the little book gives the results of this arduous undertaking. The evidence leads Fiebig to the conclusion that all the words for 'man' in Aramaic are ambiguous; thus, *barnasha*, *barnash*, and *nasha* may all mean 'a man,' 'the man,' or 'anyone.' Wellhausen is wrong when he holds that *bar* individualizes the collective *nasha* in the expression *barnasha*. Dalman is equally wrong in making *barnasha* = 'son of man,' and different from *nasha*. Lietzmann also is mistaken in saying that *barnash* is the only Aramaic for 'anyone,' and that it has this colourless sense alone. Fiebig's clear summary of the evidence and his account of the Aramaic expressions for 'man,' are very interesting. We turn to the Gospels, and start from the basis that *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* is a literal version of an ambiguous expression (either *barnasha* or *barnash*, not *nasha*), which may mean either 'the man' or 'a man' or 'anyone.' It is possible, then, that the Greek may con-

¹ *Der Menschensohn, Jesu Selbstbezeichnung, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des aramaischen Sprachgebrauches für 'Mensch.'* Von Paul Fiebig, Lic. Th. Mohr, 1901.

tain a mistaken translation, and that Jesus did not name Himself, but used the expression *barnash(a)* in the indefinite sense. Thus in Mk 2¹⁰, 'The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins.' The people seem to have understood the word in the indefinite meaning, for they 'praised God who had given such power to men.' They were wrong and the Greek is correct, for Jesus' argument proves that He spoke of Himself. Similarly, Fiebig deals with the other passages where mistranslation is suspected and finds it nowhere. Jesus used the name 'the man' of Himself, but the expression was ambiguous and might be misunderstood.

Whence comes this strange name? And why has the Greek *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* and not *ὁ ἀνθρώπος*? The passage in Daniel (7¹³) is the source, and there the LXX have *ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου*, of which *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* is the definite form. Fiebig then brings together all the places where the name occurs in the synoptic Gospels under three heads: (1) where 'the man' means the Messiah with manifest allusion to Dn 7¹³, e.g. Mt 16²⁸; (2) where 'the man' = the Messiah, but without direct reference to Daniel; (3) where 'the man' virtually = I. The latter two are not easily distinguished, for even in (3) the name is not colourless but ever suggests the Messiah. It is altogether wrong with A. Meyer to say that *barnasha* can be a simple substitute for 'I.'

What does the name mean? Daniel is the point of departure but not the limit of the sense. It is eschatological in Daniel, but on Jesus' lips it is fuller and richer in sense, and loses its particularism. But was Jesus original? Was this name for the Messiah in general use or at least familiar in certain circles? This is denied. It is an impossible name, say W. and L., nor can Jesus have used it. This is absurd. Other general expressions have become titles, and facts must decide. Fiebig finds the title in 4 Ezra and in Enoch, and argues point by point with L., who wishes to prove that it is not a *terminus technicus* where it occurs. I cannot go into details. Fiebig holds that the usage was not confined to narrow circles, as against Dalman, who does not believe it was a current title for the Messiah. Fiebig agrees with Wellhausen that the Gospels presuppose the name as well known and readily understood. Did then Jesus openly proclaim Himself Messiah? That was not His manner. The solution of the riddle

is that whenever Jesus used it it was always possible for those who heard to misunderstand Him, while believing that they understood. Jesus availed Himself of the inherent ambiguity of the name (cf. the example above, Mk 2¹⁰). Even if 'the man' was a familiar Messianic title, where nothing Messianic marked the context or the occasion, men might readily mistake His meaning, and where the Messianic reference was clear, that Jesus meant Himself was not so clear. Fiebig finds the use of the name by Jesus historical, and is clearly right. His lucid discussion of the various passages makes this view more easy to hold and defend. Wellhausen, in the latest edition of his history (1901), still agrees with Lietzmann. The verdict of the future will decide against him.

Why did Jesus choose this title? It was not unknown, but admitted ambiguity. It was in its origin particularistic, but not so much so as Son

of David. It involved more of what Jesus intended the Messiah to be, e.g. a judge to every human soul. He could develop it as it suited Him, as it was in His time a variable and fluid term. The conception of 'suffering' is an original addition. Again, it was an exalted name—a fit expression for the lofty consciousness of Jesus, placing Him in the company of God rather than of man. Finally, Jesus saw, in Dn 7¹³, as it were, the sign of His calling to which He was to be obedient unto death, a true ἀρχηγός τῆς πίστεως.

The passages where the name occurs in the Fourth Gospel agree in usage with the Synoptics, and bring out into clear relief the pre-existence involved in the expression. A discussion of these and references to the rest of the New Testament literature conclude this interesting and clearly written essay.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

ACTS II. 1-4.

'And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come.'—Literally, 'was now being fulfilled,' i.e. it had begun, but was not yet past. This day was one of the three great festivals when the law required the attendance of all Israel at the temple, and Jerusalem would be thronged with pilgrims. As the Passover fell rather early for the navigation season, Jews from the West especially would prefer to make their pilgrimage at the time of Pentecost, as we find St. Paul doing later on. Pentecost was also called the Feast of Weeks, because it fell seven (i.e. a week of) weeks after the Passover. To be exact, it was the fiftieth (Greek *pentecoste*) day after the offering of the sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest during the feast of unleavened bread.—RACKHAM.

'Together in one place.'—Rather 'together in com-

pany,' or 'in fellowship'; see 1¹⁵ 2⁴⁴⁻⁴⁷. Emphasis on mere unity of place seems superfluous.—BARTLET.

'A sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind.'—Literally, 'a sound as if a violent gust were being borne along.' St. Chrysostom rightly emphasizes the *ὡς*, so that the sound is not that of wind, but *as* of the rushing of a mighty wind (so, too, the tongues are not of fire, but *as of fire*). The words describe not a natural but a supernatural phenomenon.—KNOWLING.

'It filled all the house.'—For the hundred and twenty must have occupied more than one chamber.—RACKHAM.

'Where they were sitting.'—A Hebraism for 'were dwelling,' or 'abiding.'—COOK.

'Tongues parting asunder.'—The present part. denotes a process seen in actual operation.—RENDALL.

The fire-like appearance, originally one, broke up into tongues of flame, as it were, and distributed itself among those assembled, and sat upon each one of them. The phenomenon is taken in the narrative to symbolize the gift of tongues described in the next verse, namely, as one in source and essence, but various in manifested forms.—BARTLET.

'And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.'—There is some danger of forgetting that this was the main fact, of which the 'speaking in tongues' was but a *transitory* consequence.—PAGE AND WALPOLE.

I SEE no warrant in Scripture for the very common impression that the Holy Spirit was now first given to the Church. The language here employed is also used of