

A DEFINITION OF THE TITLE "SON OF GOD"  
IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

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This dissertation aims to define the title "Son of God" as applied to Jesus Christ in the Synoptic Gospels.

In the Old Testament the term "son of God" was variously applied to angels, Israel, Israelites, Davidic kings, and possibly to the Messiah. In intertestamental Judaism the term was used mainly with reference to Israel and its righteous people, and is never specifically applied to the Messiah. In Hellenistic literature the title was sometimes given to pagan kings, emperors, and certain heroes. None of these occurrences can form the background for the Synoptic use of the title.

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus uses only two titles of Himself: Son and Son of Man. With the title "Son" Jesus relates Himself closely to God the Father in a unique and exclusive sense, particularly in such passages as Matthew 11:27 and Mark 12:6. Jesus always addresses God in prayer as "Abba," a term never addressed to God by contemporary Palestinian Jews. At His trial Jesus publicly and clearly accepts the full title "Son of God" for Himself while claiming exclusive association with God, highlighted by a resulting charge of blasphemy. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each emphasize Jesus's sonship as divinity rather than simple messiahship.

Normally beings with supernatural insight designate Jesus as the Son of God: Gabriel, Satan, demons, Peter, and the heavenly voice at His baptism and Transfiguration. Jesus' sonship requires a supernatural revelation and announcement. Even a pagan Roman centurion confesses

Jesus' sonship through the divine revelation of the cross. The key revelation occurs at Jesus' baptism, where the perspective of the Father is given.

In virtually every reference to Jesus' sonship, it is either His supernatural origin, His unique relationship to the Father, or His claim to equality with God that is highlighted. The title may thus be defined as expressing that unique attribute of Jesus Christ by which He exclusively and ontologically shares the divine nature and character of His heavenly Father, revealing God to man as no other can do, and carrying out perfectly God's purposes as Messiah, Servant, and eternal Sovereign.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The study of the person of Jesus Christ is of primary and central importance in Christian thought,<sup>1</sup> for "Christianity is Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Walter Kasper notes that "the decisive question for Christianity has always been 'Who do you think Christ is? Who is he?'"<sup>3</sup> The New Testament answers are varied: He is called Christ, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, Prophet, Servant of God, High Priest, and a host of other names and titles. But the title which came to prevail in the New Testament as the most appropriate and most fruitful was "Jesus, the Son of God." Paul sums up his whole message in the statement, "The gospel of God concerning his Son" (Rom. 1:3, 9; cf. 2 Cor. 1:19; Gal. 1:16). Throughout church history the confession of Jesus' divine sonship has been the distinguishing mark of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> As Kasper says,

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<sup>1</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Development of Christology in the Early Church," TynB 18 (1967):77.

<sup>2</sup>J. P. Sheraton, "Our Lord's Teaching concerning Himself," PTR 1 (1903):514; cf. W. H. Griffith Thomas, Christianity Is Christ, pp. 7-10.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Kasper, Jesus the Christ, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>Sanday calls the divine sonship of Christ "the first proposition of Christian theology, the first product of reflection upon the Life of Christ that has come down to us" (William Sanday, The Life of Christ in Recent Research, p. 138). He adds that all the essential data for this proposition are present in the Synoptic Gospels.

"Christian faith stands or falls with the confession of Jesus as Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

In the Gospels no mention is made of anyone attacking Jesus' use of the title "Son of Man." But at His trial when Jesus claimed the title "Son of God," those who heard Him reacted sharply and charged Him with blasphemy. Simon Kistemaker remarks, "In the trial of Jesus before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the expression 'Son of God' stands out in bold relief."<sup>2</sup>

William Barclay claims that of all the titles of Jesus, Son of God is the title whose meaning is least clearly defined in the minds of Christians.<sup>3</sup> But the confession of Jesus as Son of God was clearly central to the thought of the early church. In fact there is no stratum of the New Testament in which the concept of Jesus as the Son of God is not basic. The Gospel of Mark opens with the title, "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1), and climaxes with the use of the title by a Roman centurion (15:39). The fact that an early copyist inserted the title into Acts 8:37 may show that it was also the baptismal confession of the early church. John made the title a decisive sign of orthodoxy (cf. 1 John 4:15; 5:5, 13). The claim to be Son of God was the principal charge against Jesus by the Jewish authorities (cf. Matt. 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:69-70; John 5:17-18; 19:7). It was also this title the crowds used in their mockery of Jesus as He hung on the cross (Matt. 27:42-43). Paul claimed to have

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<sup>1</sup>Kasper, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup>Simon Kistemaker, The Gospels in Current Study, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup>William Barclay, Jesus As They Saw Him, p. 43.

preached "the Son of God, Jesus Christ" to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:19). The entire Gospel of John was written to prove that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31).

James Dunn notes that "none of the other titles or ways of assessing Christ . . . has had both the historical depth and lasting power of 'Son of God.'"<sup>1</sup> Thus whether and how Jesus conceived Himself to be the Son of God is a question of supreme importance in New Testament Christology.<sup>2</sup>

During the past century, however, it appears that far more critical research has been devoted to the study of the title "Son of Man" than to "Son of God," possibly for several reasons: (1) Jesus often used "Son of Man" of Himself, whereas He rarely explicitly used "Son of God"; and (2) scholars have tended to accept many of the "Son of Man" passages as authentic, while relegating the "Son of God" passages to later church theology and redaction. In Edward McDowell's book on the "consciousness of Jesus concerning His person and mission," he spends a meager four pages on the title "Son of God" but devotes more than thirty pages to the "Son of Man."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Need for the Study

Some have suggested that the Son of God title "is the most misunderstood term in the entire New Testament."<sup>4</sup> For a modern orthodox

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<sup>1</sup>James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," Interp 21 (1967):87.

<sup>3</sup>Edward A. McDowell, Son of Man and Suffering Servant, pp. 92-130.

<sup>4</sup>Arie de Kuiper and Barclay M. Newman, Jr., "Jesus,

Christian to say that "Jesus is the Son of God" means that Jesus is the preexistent, second Person of the Trinity—a confession of His deity.<sup>1</sup> However, as Leon Morris notes, it is easy to read the New Testament with spectacles provided by the classic Christian creeds and theological formulations, so that one reads into the apostolic writings meanings that are not there.<sup>2</sup> Many believe that this is now true of the term "Son of God."

Orthodox believers would agree with William Tyler that Jesus is the Son of God because (1) there is a special union or oneness between Him and the Father, (2) He is the image or personal revelation of God Himself, (3) He is the representative of the Father and acts for Him in the universe, and (4) He is really and truly God, clothed with all the attributes and prerogatives of deity.<sup>3</sup>

Martin Hengel represents much modern scholarship, however, when he states that the question of how the early disciples' belief in the historical (purely human) Jesus changed so quickly into a belief in Jesus as the heavenly Son of God is "the riddle of the origin of the christology of the early church."<sup>4</sup> The importance of the present study lies in the fact that in first-century Christianity, "it is the title

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Son of God—A Translation Problem," BiTr 28 (1977):432.

<sup>1</sup>Dunn, p. 13. For some, however, the idea that Jesus is divine and therefore somehow superior to other religions is an "embarrassing doctrine" (cf. Frans Jozef van Beeck, "Professing the Uniqueness of Christ," Chicago Studies 24 [1985]:17-35).

<sup>2</sup>Leon Morris, "The Emergence of the Doctrine of the Incarnation: A Review Article," Them 8 (September 1982):16.

<sup>3</sup>William S. Tyler, "The Son of God," BS 22 (1865):623-36.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, p. 1.

Son of God which regularly and repeatedly bears the primary weight of the claim made" concerning Christ's relationship with God.<sup>1</sup>

I. Howard Marshall has listed four major current approaches to the title Son of God: (1) the conservative approach which says that Jesus used the title of Himself as the unique, messianic Son of God; (2) the religio-historical view of the title as equivalent to the Hellenistic concept of the "divine man" or the Gnostic redeemer myth; (3) the modern critical view that, though Jesus spoke of His close relationship to God the Father as either a servant or son, the later church expanded these statements into the New Testament title; and (4) the traditio-historical approach which states that the title was developed completely within the theology of the early church, so that it is impossible to know how Jesus thought of Himself.<sup>2</sup>

According to Marshall the key issues are (1) whether Jesus thought of Himself as the divine Son of God; (2) whether the Son of God title was introduced (or modified) into the church by outside influences; and (3) whether the history of the title in the early church can be traced.<sup>3</sup> Several of these questions will be dealt with later in this study.

Geerhardus Vos lists four senses in which the term Son of God has been used: (1) a purely moral and religious sense, as a "child of God"; (2) an official or messianic sense, derived from the Old

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<sup>1</sup>Dunn, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology, pp. 111-12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

Testament; (3) a nativistic sense, ascribing the origin of Christ's human nature to the supernatural paternity of God; and (4) the Trinitarian sense, which affirms the sonship as existing in eternity past, antedating and transcending the human life of Jesus. According to Vos all four of these senses occur in connection with Jesus, if the New Testament teaching is taken as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely here that the meaning of the Son of God title must be more specifically defined. Conservatives have not adequately dealt with the historical, exegetical, and theological issues raised by recent critics.

#### The Issues of the Study

##### The self-consciousness of Jesus

The question of the self-consciousness of Jesus is a vital one for Christians.<sup>2</sup> Did Jesus understand and present Himself as the unique Son of God? Wolfhart Pannenberg answers in the negative:

Today it must be taken as all but certain that the pre-Easter Jesus neither designated himself as Messiah (or Son of God) nor accepted such a confession to him from others. . . . the predicate "the Son," which is to be distinguished from the title "Son of God," was also not a designation that Jesus applied to himself but rather . . . the

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<sup>1</sup>Geerhardus Vos, The Self-Disclosure of Jesus, pp. 140-41. According to Otto Pflleiderer, the early church held three opinions concerning the meaning of the title Son of God: (1) the man Jesus Christ was adopted to become the Son of God, either at His baptism or at His resurrection; (2) Jesus was the Son of God as a preexistent heavenly being who became incarnate (as seen in Hebrews and the writings of Paul and John); and (3) Jesus was the Son of God because He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary (as seen in Matthew and Luke). Pflleiderer traces the adoptionistic ideas to the Old Testament, the metaphysical sonship to Hellenism, and the accounts of the virgin birth of Christ to pagan legends (Otto Pflleiderer, The Early Christian Conception of Christ, pp. 16-34).

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "Development," p. 79.



community named him who had spoken of God as his Father simply "the Son."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand many argue that "the idea of divine Sonship goes back to Jesus Himself."<sup>2</sup> Jesus was conscious of a unique relationship of sonship to God the Father, which reveals itself in His use of Abba in prayer,<sup>3</sup> His reference to God as "my Father," and His speaking of Himself as "the Son" (cf. Matt. 11:27; Mark 12:6; 13:32).<sup>4</sup> Marshall contends that the determining factor in Jesus' use of the Son of God title was His awareness of a special relationship to God, rather than the messianic implications of the term or a Hellenistic concept of a "divine man."<sup>5</sup> The early church then regarded the resurrection of Christ as simply the vindication of a claim that Jesus had already made for Himself (cf. Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4).<sup>6</sup> The source of the later church's thought about Jesus was His own manner of referring to Himself.<sup>7</sup> The early Christian community believed from the very beginning that Jesus was the Son of God.<sup>8</sup> In fact Raymond Brown remarks that the confession that Jesus is the Son of God is "quite ancient" in

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus—God and Man, p. 327.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "Development," p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament, pp. 9-30.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "Development," p. 79.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-80.

<sup>8</sup>Pfleiderer, p. 16.

the early church (cf. Acts 9:20; 1 Thess. 1:10).<sup>1</sup>

Even many who are not so sure that Jesus actually claimed divine sonship recognize the uniqueness of His relationship to God. Richard Bauckham states, "If there were no evidence that Jesus understood his relation to God to be in any way distinctive it would be difficult to maintain that he was in fact uniquely related to God."<sup>2</sup> But Bauckham is forced to admit that Jesus' religious consciousness was distinctive and that He claimed a unique relation to God. Kasper concludes that Jesus did claim to speak and act in place of God and to be in a unique communion with His "Father." This, says Kasper, "is a unique claim in the history of religion."<sup>3</sup>

#### The meaning of the title

The problem of the precise meaning of the Son of God title throughout the New Testament is a difficult one. Leonhard Goppelt lists four Christological titles that were common in the early Christian community: Servant of God, Christ, Son of God, and Lord (as in Maranatha). Of these, he states that Christ and Son of God were used mostly in kerygmatic and confessional formulas, that is, to proclaim and to confess Christ as Son of God.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond E. Brown, Jesus, God and Man, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology," SJTh 31 (1978):245.

<sup>3</sup>Kasper, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 2:19. Gary Burke concludes that the title Son of God in the New Testament was a means of expressing a relationship which could also be indicated in other ways (EDT, pp. 1032-33). As a title in Hellenistic and Jewish circles it was relatively rare, but numerous examples are extant in

Preexistent divinity. For Dunn the crucial questions are these: (1) Did the Son of God language used of Jesus always denote deity and signify preexistent divinity? (2) What was it about Jesus that caused the first disciples to call him "Son of God"? (3) How soon did the Son of God confession come to bear this significance, and why?<sup>1</sup> R. C. Sproul notes that "Son of God" does not necessarily imply an ascription of deity, since in the Bible both men and angels are at times called "sons of God."<sup>2</sup>

A strong claim can be made, however, that the term Son of God connotes Semitic and Oriental ideas of "likeness or sameness of nature" and "equality of being."<sup>3</sup> If Jesus is God's self-revelation (cf. Heb. 1:1-2), then, as Pannenberg puts it, "Jesus' person cannot be separated from God's essence."<sup>4</sup>

Bauckham concludes that the biblical evidence does not demonstrate that Jesus was conscious of His unique sonship as divinity. Jesus did experience His relationship to God as unique, but "the historical Jesus' consciousness of unique relationship to God does not by itself require the confession of his divinity,"<sup>5</sup> although it is presupposed or implied by such a confession.

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ancient Near Eastern, Hellenistic, and Roman sources of the phrase expressing a relationship of physical descent, especially with reference to kings.

<sup>1</sup>Dunn, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>R. C. Sproul, "Son of God and Son of Man," Tenth 9 (July 1979):13.

<sup>3</sup>Lorraine Boettner, Studies in Theology, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup>Pannenberg, p. 158.

<sup>5</sup>Bauckham, p. 258.

Using a largely negative form of methodology, Dunn concludes that in earliest Christianity the Son of God title did not carry with it the concept of incarnation or preexistence and thus did not include divinity. "The christology of a pre-existent Son of God becoming man only began to emerge in the last decades of the first century, and only appears in a clear form within the NT in its latest writings."<sup>1</sup> Such a Christology, he says, cannot be traced back to Jesus Himself.

Messianic function. A number of scholars, conservatives included, see in the title principally a messianic designation. Brown states that the title is ambiguous, denoting not divine filiation but only a special relationship to God. In the New Testament it is a messianic term, derived from its use in the Old Testament for the king. Brown admits, however, that "there is no published, pre-Christian Jewish evidence for 'son of God' as a title for the Davidic Messiah."<sup>2</sup> The messianic interpretation of Psalm 2 may have prompted it. Jesus was given the title in view of His messianic honor obtained through His resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible that the title was both messianic (originating in the Old Testament) and reflective of the unique filial consciousness of Jesus in the midst of His messianic mission.<sup>4</sup> In a number of passages the titles Messiah (Christ) and Son of God are related (e.g., Matt.

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<sup>1</sup>Dunn, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Brown, pp. 87-88.

<sup>3</sup>Pannenberg, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Ronald Wallace, in EDT, p. 223.

16:16; 26:63; Mark 8:29; Luke 1:32-35; 4:41; John 11:27; 20:31; Acts 9:20-22; Heb. 1:5-13), but Richard Longenecker contends that there is no reason to assume that Son of God is used as a synonym for the title Christ in these passages, or to supersede this title.<sup>1</sup> The writers may have considered "Son of God" to be the logical implication of "Messiah."

Other possible meanings for the title have been suggested. Each needs to be tested in the light of the clear biblical data.

#### Functional versus ontological Christology

It is generally agreed among New Testament scholars that a number of New Testament writers understood Jesus to be the Son of God in a "metaphysical" or "ontological" sense. "What is in dispute," says Marshall, "is whether their predecessors in the early church went beyond a purely functional interpretation of the person of Jesus and gave Him ontological status," even if the full implications of this had not been worked out.<sup>2</sup> Modern scholarship has preferred to see in the earliest use of the Son of God title a statement of functional sonship—that is, that Jesus was Son not in His being but in what He did for God.

Exegetically the question is significant. Was the Christology of the later church a legitimate development from the statements and theology of the earliest church? Were there competing or contradictory Christologies in the early church? Was there a significant change of meaning in the content of the title "Son of God" between the Jewish and

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<sup>1</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "Development," p. 78, n. 6.

the Gentile stages of Christianity?<sup>1</sup>

John A. T. Robinson lists three "representations of reality"<sup>2</sup> which he believes existed in the first century. (1) In the mythological view Christ is seen as a heavenly figure who is a personification of some aspect of God's being or will (e.g., in some Jewish pseudepigrapha and Gnosticism). (2) In the ontological view Christ is seen as a co-equal Person of the Godhead, the uncreated Being who assumed manhood without ceasing to be God (in which the title Son of God is translated as God the Son). (3) In the functional view Christ does what God does and thus represents God and functions as God. Robinson believes that all three views are traceable in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> But he argues forcefully that the functional is the dominant Christology of the New Testament, including the Gospel of John, and that functional Christology is indeed the highest Christology of all.<sup>4</sup> He laments that the later church was not content with the functional conception of Christ's sonship and thus went on to decree that "Jesus is God" in a supernatural way that no ordinary human being could be.<sup>5</sup>

Much recent scholarship denies that Jesus ever spoke of Himself

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>John A. T. Robinson, The Human Face of God, pp. 182-84.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 185. Styler believes that the ontological Christology of Hebrews and John should not be read back into the earlier stages of the Church. He assumes that "neither 'Son of God' nor 'Son of man' are originally ontological; their primary reference is not to nature but to function" (G. M. Styler, "Stages in Christology in the Synoptic Gospels," NTS 10 [1964]:400).

<sup>4</sup>Robinson, pp. 185-95.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 194-95.

as the Son of God or that the earliest church spoke of Him as the Son of God in an ontological way, concluding instead that many of the ontological statements of the New Testament must be understood in a mythological way today.<sup>1</sup> Even Bauckham, though he concedes that a purely functional Christology is inadequate, since Jesus' mission is rooted in the personal intimacy of the Son with the Father,<sup>2</sup> nevertheless states, "Jesus cannot be said to be the Son independently of his mission."<sup>3</sup>

If the New Testament is allowed to speak for itself, however, it becomes clear that Jesus experienced His sonship both as a relationship and a responsibility to be fulfilled in obedience to His Father's will.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, "Development," p. 78; cf. Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology, pp. 142-74, 243-48; Dunn, pp. 12-64; Robinson, pp. 182-95.

<sup>2</sup>Bauckham, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 258. Pannenberg notes that Jesus maintained a distinction between Himself as Son and the Father. He summarizes the relationship of Jesus as Son to the Father as "obedience" and "trust" (p. 159). He says that "the title 'Son' designates a particularly close community with the 'Father'" (p. 172, n. 136). Bauckham states that Jesus is uniquely the Son of God in that others become sons through His sonship (cf. Gal. 4:4-6). The unique quality of Christ's sonship, he says, is that it must be shared. "It is the imperative of his filial mission (and therefore essential to his sonship) to mediate to others his own filial relation to God. His sonship means this" (p. 259). Bauckham adds, "To see the sonship of the historical Jesus grounded in the eternal Trinitarian being of the Father and the Son is to see the eternal Trinity open in love to men. . . . Jesus' sonship is not to be distinguished as divine or human. . . . For Jesus to be the divine Son means that he must equally be the human Son. As the divine Son he comes from God's side to mediate God's fatherly presence to men" (p. 260).

<sup>4</sup>Bauckham, p. 258. The Pontifical Biblical Commission divides the titles of Christ between "functional titles" and "relational titles (concerning Christ's relationship with God)," including among the latter "the Son" and "the Word" (Commission Biblique Pontificale, Bible et Christologie, pp. 54-55).

As Kasper notes, "essential Christology and functional Christology . . . cannot be opposed. . . . they are mutually dependent. . . . functional Christology implies an essential Christology."<sup>1</sup>

The relation between "Son" and "Son of God"

Ferdinand Hahn draws a fundamental distinction between the title "Son of God" and the absolute title "the Son," claiming that the two terms have different roots and should not be simply identified.<sup>2</sup> This is due to his conclusion that "only with 'the Son' is the designation of God as 'Father' found as correlative in the New Testament," and that there is no clear reference to the designation of God as Father where the title "Son of God" is used.<sup>3</sup>

This distinction is dubious, however. Donald Guthrie claims that Hahn's theory "rests too heavily on the view that Son of God is derived from the Greek notion of divine man."<sup>4</sup> Marshall gives several reasons why the terms "Son" and "Son of God" should not be distinguished when Jesus speaks of Himself. (1) The distinction between the two terms was not noticed by John or Mark, since they use "the Son" as equivalent to "the Son of God" (cf. Mark 13:32). (2) It is not always clear whether "God" or "the Father" is the antecedent where the terms "His

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<sup>1</sup>Kasper, pp. 110-11. Thompson also tries to relate the functional and ontological approaches to each other (William M. Thompson, Jesus, Lord and Savior, pp. 82-83). A. N. S. Lane states that "the New Testament is predominantly (but not exclusively) functional . . ." ("Christology beyond Chalcedon," in Christ the Lord, p. 264).

<sup>2</sup>Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 279-80.

<sup>4</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, p. 305.



Son" or "My Son" are used. (3) There are several uses of "Son of God" in conjunction with "the Father," showing that the title "Son of God," like "the Son," indicates His filial relationship to God.<sup>1</sup>

The precise definition of "the Son" as Jesus' self-description will obviously have significant implications for the Son of God title if the two designations are found to be equivalent.

#### The evolution of the title

To what extent did the Son of God title evolve and change in its basic meaning from the time of Jesus' ministry to the writing of Hebrews and the Johannine literature? Hengel states that since Paul in the mid-fifties (A.D.) taught that Jesus Christ was divine and preexistent (cf. Phil. 2:6-8), the "apotheosis" of Jesus into the divine Son of God must have taken place within two decades of His death, and that later New Testament doctrine was simply a consistent development and completion of what had already been established during these first two decades.<sup>2</sup>

Hahn lists five possible derivations of the Palestinian form of the title: (1) royal messianism; (2) the expectation of a messianic high priest; (3) the Son of Man concept; (4) the Servant of God expectation; and (5) Jesus' belief in God as His Father.<sup>3</sup> He opts for royal messianism as the source,<sup>4</sup> and then claims that the title evolved within the Hellenistic church to become a description of the unique being of

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, Origins, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Hengel, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Hahn, p. 279.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The question of a basic change in the title's meaning during the first century needs to be examined carefully.

#### The Purpose of the Study

The present study is designed to determine the precise meaning of the Son of God title as it is applied to Jesus Christ in the Synoptic Gospels. The origin, development, and various usages of the title will be considered. The study will also attempt to determine whether the title was given its basic New Testament definition by Jesus Himself or whether the title was developed or borrowed by the New Testament writers from Hellenistic or contemporary Jewish sources.

A central proposition of this study is that the title Son of God in the Synoptic Gospels virtually everywhere assumes the genuine, metaphysical (ontological), divine Sonship of Jesus Christ.

#### The Method of the Study

A history of the interpretation of the title will first be presented. The origin of the title will then be considered by an examination of possible parallels in the Old Testament, in Hellenistic literature, and in various Jewish writings. Attention will then shift to the Synoptic Gospels, where the terms "Father," "Son," and "Son of God" will be investigated to determine the precise meaning of the title Son of God wherever it appears. Each usage will be analyzed as to speaker, context, and effect in order to reveal whether the title is used in various ways by different persons, and whether there is a common

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 279. Hahn concedes that the Son of God title undoubtedly had a previous history in Palestine, but also claims that the title received an essentially different meaning on Hellenistic soil.

base of meaning. The methods of grammatical exegesis, biblical theology, and historical, source, form, and redaction criticism will all be noted to some extent. Finally, some exegetical and theological conclusions will be drawn.

#### Sources of data

The problem of sources in most modern New Testament research is complex. Many scholars express a deep pessimism concerning the historical accuracy of Christological statements in the New Testament. Willi Marxsen, for example, says that "it is absolutely impossible to answer the question concerning the beginning of Christology by means of exegesis of the New Testament."<sup>1</sup> Less extreme is the view of James Charlesworth:

One must distinguish between what is in the New Testament from what is behind it. What is in the New Testament are the theologically edited reflections of the early Christians; what is behind the New Testament are the earliest historical individuals and communities that were created out of historical events, namely the experience and memory of Jesus' life and horrifying death, and the claim to having been confronted by a resurrected Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

However, Charlesworth is opposed to separating faith from history. "The Christ who is worshipped," he notes, "must be anchored in the Jesus who was crucified."<sup>3</sup> To confess the death of Jesus on

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<sup>1</sup>Willi Marxsen, The Beginnings of Christology, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>James H. Charlesworth, "Research on the Historical Jesus Today," PSB 6 (1985):103. He also remarks, "Historical research is scientific by method but not by conclusion; the historian at best can provide us not with irrelative certainty but with relative probability. Hence any discourse on searching for ipsissima verba Jesu (Jesus' own exact words) and absolute certainty about recovering them is imprecise, imperceptive, and impossible" (pp. 99-100).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

Golgotha is "a probability obtained by the highest canons of scientific historical research."<sup>1</sup>

Extreme skepticism with regard to the historical reliability of the New Testament documents is nearsighted.<sup>2</sup> As Hengel puts it,

The destructive scepticism, a particular feature of the modern world, which works in a predominantly analytical way, often ultimately ends up, not by furthering real historical understanding but by making it impossible. It is striking here that in particular those authors who apply radical criticism to early Christian narrators like Mark or Luke . . . often invent facts of their own which have no basis whatever in the sources and indeed go directly against them. . . . We are concerned only with the truth, theological and historical. The truth is our sole obligation; we have to seek and to present it, and in the end it will prevail against all our conjectures, all our desires to be right, our imaginative constructions and our anxiety.<sup>3</sup>

Another misleading tendency in modern critical study is to look for "parallels" to the Son of God title in Jewish or Hellenistic sources, and to regard these parallels as explanations of what is found in the New Testament. R. T. France lists four cautions to this method: (1) Are the parallels real? Simple coincidence of words or imagery proves nothing. (2) Do the "parallels" come from a relevant culture? A parallel is of no value if it comes from a milieu completely foreign to the New Testament writers. (3) Are the parallels significant? Similarity of wording or concept does not prove dependence. (4) Is a parallel necessarily a source or influence? This method often views Christianity as a "sponge," soaking up whatever religious ideas were

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>See F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? and "Are the New Testament Documents Still Reliable?" in Evangelical Roots, pp. 49-61.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Hengel, Between Jesus and Paul, pp. xiv-xv.

present in the first-century Mediterranean world. This approach ignores the fact that Christianity received its central message from Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>1</sup>

### Methods

The study of the Son of God title has in this century been deeply affected by two widely used methods of New Testament study. Form criticism assumes that the sayings and stories about Jesus were first circulated in the early church in small independent units (traditions). These units were then classified according to their literary forms: sayings (parables, proverbs, prophecies, legal statements, etc.) and stories (historical settings, miracle stories, legends, myths, etc.). The various units were then arranged in terms of relative age, from early (historically reliable) to late (unreliable). Form critics then attempted to reconstruct the setting in life of the early church which may have produced the final form of the story or saying.

Millard Erickson has noted that on the positive side form criticism has done well to emphasize the connection between the Gospel accounts of Jesus' words and deeds and the faith and life of the early Christians (cf. John 20:31). The Gospel authors were members of a community of believers, and not radical isolationists. What the Gospel writers chose to include or emphasize shows a great deal about the early church.<sup>2</sup>

On the negative side, however, both the presuppositions and the

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<sup>1</sup>R. T. France, "The Worship of Jesus," in Christ the Lord, pp. 19-21.

<sup>2</sup>Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 3 vols., 1:89-90.

application of form criticism have produced many unacceptable results. Much of form criticism carries an implicit assumption that the early Christians were not interested in history and that the Gospel writers were incompetent and unreliable historians. The classification of Gospel units as early or late, Jewish or Hellenistic is usually very subjective, and discounts the tremendously Jewish character of both the Synoptic and Johannine material. The life settings and practical issues of the churches with which Paul had contact do not seem to be reflected very heavily in any of the Gospels. Form criticism's standard of authenticity in connection with the sayings of Jesus is so negative that historical critics in many other fields would not be able to use it. Form criticism allows almost no place for the possibility that eyewitnesses may be responsible for the written records of the Gospels or for the possibility of inspiration and guidance by the Holy Spirit. Erickson and others conclude that form criticism has some useful contributions to New Testament study, but that its negative presuppositions and method make its conclusions extremely suspect.<sup>1</sup>

Redaction criticism attempts to move beyond the findings of form criticism to treat the Gospel writers as genuine authors and editors. It is concerned with the relationship of the authors to the written sources. It examines the active role of the writers in the production

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:90-95; cf. D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," in Scripture and Truth, p. 121; William G. Most, The Consciousness of Christ, pp. 175-228; Walter A. Maier, Form Criticism Reexamined, CTS; and Edgar V. McKnight, What Is Form Criticism?, NIS. Most concludes, however, that "neither the form critics nor any similar group have proved any specific point against the truthfulness of the Gospel account" (p. 224).

of their Gospels. It assumes that each author had a theological concern, and in fact that they were more theologians than historians. On the positive side, searching for redactional emphases can help to determine the particular emphases of the Gospel writers. It can be used to help answer Synoptic problems. On the negative side, however, redaction criticism depends too heavily on the skeptical presuppositions and methods of the form critics.<sup>1</sup> It limits itself to the investigation of the situation and purpose of the authors, and uses negative criteria for the authenticity of Jesus' sayings and deeds. Too much attention is paid to presumed editorial passages, and not enough to the historical material the author chose to include.<sup>2</sup>

D. A. Carson remarks that "the task of the redaction critic is to distinguish between what is redactional and what is traditional."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to Wilder the categories and assumptions used in form and redaction criticism are being questioned: "It may be that the tools and focus of observation associated with modern literary method have not been fully suited to what these writings have to say" (Amos Wilder, review of What Is Redaction Criticism? by Norman Perrin, in Christology and a Modern Pilgrimage, pp. 91-92). He adds that "any too rigorous linking of redactional criticism with form criticism may even handicap the task" (p. 92). He warns that "a concern with the evolution of early Christianity inherited from an older focus of critical scholarship--again with genetic and historicist presuppositions--might stand in the way of an immediate encounter with a Gospel and the intention of its author" (p. 95). Achtemeier and Tucker agree that "we are at a turning point concerning our fundamental methodologies for interpreting biblical texts . . . the historical-critical method . . . is under fire from many directions. From without, there is new life from the old enemies of critical inquiry into the Bible: traditional, conservative, and fundamentalist theology. More decisive, however, for the future of biblical scholarship are the rumblings within the ranks" (Paul J. Achtemeier and Gene M. Tucker, "Biblical Studies: The State of the Discipline," CSRB 11 [1980]:73).

<sup>2</sup>Erickson, 1:95-102.

<sup>3</sup>Carson, p. 122.

Radical redaction criticism therefore often depends on the validity of form criticism.<sup>1</sup> The following are among his criticisms of the method: (1) The criteria that are used to distinguish between redaction and tradition are imprecise and often "silly" (e.g., the criterion of dissimilarity that assumes that an authentic teaching of Jesus is one that has no parallel in the early church or in Judaism or Hellenism). (2) Because of these criteria, the method lends itself to "unbounded subjectivity." (3) The method gives too much theological significance to differences between relatively unimportant words. (4) The method forgets that Jesus was an itinerant preacher, giving the same messages countless times with minor variations or rearrangements of material.<sup>2</sup>

Radical/redaction criticism tends to call various passages unhistorical simply because they are judged redactional rather than traditional. Carson contends that much of its method is based on "reconstructions that are no more than deductions based on debatable judgements."<sup>3</sup> He concludes that redaction criticism is "an inadequate tool for establishing authenticity" in the sayings of Jesus, and that it is "well-nigh useless" if redaction criticism depends on radical form

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. He notes that "source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism collapse methodologically into one procedure."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 124-27; cf. Most, p. 222. According to Most, "the redaction critics tend to attribute too much artistry and ingenuity to the evangelists, in strange, but predictable contrast to the early view of form critics who did not consider them true authors at all" (p. 223). For a positive view, see Norman Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism?, passim.

<sup>3</sup>D. A. Carson, "Christological Ambiguities in the Gospel of Matthew," in Christ the Lord, p. 98.



criticism in such questions.<sup>1</sup>

These critical methodologies need to be evaluated carefully for New Testament study. They are often based on antisupernatural presuppositions, circular reasoning, unwarranted criteria, arbitrariness, subjectivity, and an assumed antithesis between faith and reason.<sup>2</sup> In much of redaction criticism "possibilities" build on "probabilities" so that conclusions have only a tenuous relation to historical fact.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, as Erickson notes: "When the method is formulated using assumptions that are open to the possibility of the supernatural and of the authenticity of the materials, and criteria are applied that are not more severe than those used in other areas of historical inquiry, very positive results occur."<sup>4</sup>

Carson suggests using a multiplicity of methods and adopting competing literary tools.<sup>5</sup> Parallel accounts need to be harmonized wherever possible. An author who proves reliable in testable areas can

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<sup>1</sup>Carson, "Redaction Criticism," p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>In 1973 Walter Wink declared that "historical biblical criticism is bankrupt" (Walter Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation, p. 1), since as practiced by most contemporary scholars it is incapable of achieving its purpose of interpreting the Scriptures for personal and social transformation. In declaring a "detached neutrality in matters of faith," questions of "truth and meaning have been excluded" (p. 2). In fact "the historical critical method had a vested interest in undermining the Bible's authority" and "it required functional atheism for its practice" (pp. 3-4). The method, said Wink, "pretends to search for 'assured results,' 'objective knowledge,' when in fact the method presumes radical epistemological doubt" (p. 7).

<sup>3</sup>Erickson, 1:102-4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1:104.

<sup>5</sup>Carson, "Redaction Criticism," p. 140.

be trusted as reliable in nontestable areas.<sup>1</sup> Redaction criticism should be used cautiously and with qualification.<sup>2</sup>

In the present study the insights and conclusions of form criticism and redaction criticism will be utilized where helpful, but more attention will be given to the New Testament in its final form than to arbitrary and subjective "probabilities." The question of the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus will be discussed at some length in chapter six.

#### The occurrences of the title

The word "son" (υἱός) occurs approximately 380 times in the New Testament. Of these, it is used as a title for Jesus' sonship 114 times (the titles "Son of Man," "Son of David," and others are not included in this analysis). Each occurrence is listed below:

1. Son of God (including "Son of the Most High" and "Son of the Blessed One"; an asterisk denotes the presence of the Greek definite article):
  - a. Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16\*; 26:63\*; 27:40, 43, 54
  - b. Mark 1:1; 3:11\*; 5:7; 14:61\*; 15:39
  - c. Luke 1:32, 35; 4:3, 9, 41\*; 8:28; 22:70\*
  - d. John 1:34\*, 49\*; 3:18\*; 5:25\*; 9:35\*; 10:36; 11:4\*, 27\*; 19:7; 20:31\*
  - e. Acts 9:20\*
  - f. Romans 1:4
  - g. 2 Corinthians 1:19\*

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

- h. Galatians 2:20\*
- i. Ephesians 4:13\*
- j. Hebrews 4:14\*; 5:6\*; 7:3\*; 10:29\*
- k. 1 John 3:8; 4:15\*; 5:5\*, 10\*, 12\*, 13\*, 20\*
- l. Revelation 2:18\*

The occurrences of the term "Son of God" can be summarized as follows: (1) total—46; (2) Synoptic Gospels—21; (3) Gospel of John—9; (4) Paul—4; (5) Hebrews—4; (6) other Johannine literature—8.

2. My Son:

- a. Matthew 2:15; 3:17; 17:5
- b. Mark 1:11; 9:7
- c. Luke 3:22; 9:35
- d. Acts 13:33
- e. Hebrews 1:5; 5:5
- f. 2 Peter 1:17

Each of these 11 occurrences is a reference either to (1) Psalm 2:7, (2) Hosea 11:1, (3) the voice of God at Jesus' baptism, or (4) the voice of God at Jesus' transfiguration.

3. His Son:

- a. John 3:16, 17
- b. Romans 1:3, 9; 5:10; 8:3, 29, 32
- c. 1 Corinthians 1:9
- d. Galatians 1:16; 4:4, 6
- e. Colossians 1:13
- f. 1 Thessalonians 1:10
- g. 1 John 1:3, 7; 3:23; 4:9, 10; 5:9, 10, 11, 20

This phrase occurs only in Paul (12 times) and in John (11 times). This may indicate that by the time Paul and John wrote, referring to Christ as "His [God's] Son" (ontolog-

ically) had become common and normal.

4. The Son (indicated by an asterisk; otherwise, sometimes a Son):

- a. Matthew 11:27\* (2); 28:19\*
- b. Luke 10:22\* (2)
- c. John 3:35\*, 36\* (2); 5:19\* (2), 20\*, 21\*, 22\*, 23\* (2), 26\*; 6:40\*; 8:36\*; 14:13\*
- d. 1 Corinthians 15:28\*
- e. Hebrews 1:2, 5, 8\*; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28
- f. 1 John 2:22\*, 23\* (2), 24\*; 4:14\*; 5:12\*

This absolute "the Son" occurs 32 times. Of these, five are in the Synoptic Gospels, 20 in John's writings, one in Paul, and six in Hebrews.

5. Your Son

John 17:1 (in Christ's prayer to the Father).

6. The Only-Begotten (μονογενής)

John 1:18

These 114 occurrences of the Son of God title may be charted

thus:

	Son of God	The Son	My Son	His Son	Your Son	Totals	Percentage of NT Usage
Matthew	9	3	3			15	13%
Mark	5		2			7	6%
Luke	7	2	2			11	10%
Johannine writings	17	20		11	1	49	43%
Paul	4	1		12		17	15%
Hebrews	4	6	2			12	10%
Acts	1		1			2	2%
2 Peter			1			1	1%
Totals	47	32	11	23	1	114	100%
Percentage of N.T. Usage	41%	28%	10%	23%	1%	100%	

Twenty-nine percent of the references in the New Testament to Jesus as God's "Son" occur in the Synoptic Gospels, and of these, 64 percent are found in the form "Son of God."

PART I

HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

## CHAPTER II

### A HISTORY OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TITLE "SON OF GOD"

The great Christological declarations of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) have been central in Christianity for more than 1,500 years. Even when the Eastern and Western Churches split over ecclesiastical issues in A.D. 1054, and the Reformation tore the Western Church apart in the sixteenth century, Christendom's view of the person of Christ remained solid. It was not until the Enlightenment and the subsequent influx of naturalistic assumptions into theology that the orthodox view of the person of Christ began to be seriously attacked in mainline Christianity. In addition the rise of source, form, and redaction criticism has raised serious questions as to how much can really be known of Christ's person and self-consciousness. This chapter will briefly survey the role that the title Son of God has played in this debate.

#### The First Four Centuries

Following the close of the New Testament canon, the strong presentation in the Johannine writings of Jesus as the divine Son of God had a profound influence on later Christian writers. The title Son of God was "firmly adhered to in the Gentile Christian communities" of the

second century.<sup>1</sup> Passages can be found in the earliest Christian literature in which Jesus is designated Son of God independently of and before His human existence.

### Second century

Ignatius (ca. A.D. 108<sup>2</sup>) was the first second-century writer to speak freely of the deity of Christ, frequently using the phrase "our God Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> In doing so, he may show dependence on the Gospel of John. His view of Christ is historical and dynamic.<sup>4</sup> Ignatius called Christ both "begotten" (γεννητός) and "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος) —begotten in His manhood, unbegotten in His divinity (causing problems later, following the Nicene Council).<sup>5</sup> His use of the Son of God title is frequent, often combining it with Father and Spirit to form a Trinitarian statement.<sup>6</sup> He was also one of the earliest writers to

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<sup>1</sup>Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, 1:186.

<sup>2</sup>All dates hereafter are A.D. unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup>Ignatius Ephesians 1. 1; 7. 1; 18. 2 (" . . . our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary"); 19. 3; Romans 3. 3; 6. 3; Smyrmaeans 10. 1; Trallians 7. 1; Polycarp 8. 3; and the salutations to the Ephesians and to the Romans. See also Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christos, pp. 321-22; Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 1: From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), p. 87.

<sup>4</sup>John Dwyer, Son of Man & Son of God, p. 49. Dwyer believes that Ignatius showed dependence on the Gospel of John and the Johannine school.

<sup>5</sup>Ignatius Ephesians 7. 2; cf. Grillmeier, pp. 87-89. Harnack says that Ignatius deduced the predicate "Son" from Christ's birth in the flesh. He claims that the adoptionistic conception of Jesus the Son as the chosen Servant of God was not retained by the Gentile churches because it did not appeal to the aspects of Christianity which they regarded as of highest value (Harnack, 1:194, n. 199).

<sup>6</sup>Ignatius Magnesians 13. 1 ("Be diligent therefore to be confirmed in the ordinances of the Lord and the Apostles, in order that



interpret mistakenly the title "Son of Man" as representing Jesus' humanity as opposed to the title "Son of God" (signifying Jesus' deity).<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle of Barnabas (early second century) used the title Son of God a number of times. The author claimed that God was speaking to His Son in Genesis 1:26, 28 when He said, "Let us make man in Our image." He concluded that the Son of God did not become such through the Incarnation but was already Son of God before His coming in the flesh and before the creation of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The Ebionites of the second century denied that Jesus is the Son of God. Instead they said that Christ was not begotten of God the Father but was created as the highest of the archangels. They taught that the union of a heavenly being with the man Jesus (at His baptism) resulted in the Christ, the Son of God. Grillmeier notes that the Ebionites arose among Jewish Christianity because the idea of Jesus as Son of God was felt to be a stumbling block for the Jews.<sup>3</sup>

The Shepherd of Hermas (ca. 90-150) tells a parable in which the servant of a landowner is identified as the Son of God, who cleanses the

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'you may prosper in all things whatsoever ye do' in the flesh and in the spirit, in faith and love, in the Son and the Father and the Spirit.").

<sup>1</sup>Ignatius Ephesians 20. 2. See also the Epistle of Barnabas 12. 10 ("Jesus, not a son of man, but the Son of God"); Irenaeus Against Heresies 3. 16. 7; 3. 17. 1; Justin Martyr Dialogue 76. 1; 100; Odes of Solomon 36. 3; James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, p. 65; Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, 2:223.

<sup>2</sup>Epistle of Barnabas 6. 12; cf. also 5. 9, 11; 7. 2. 9; 12. 8-11; 15. 5; Grillmeier, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Grillmeier, pp. 76-77.

sins of God's people and shows them the ways of life.<sup>1</sup> Hermas implies that the Holy Spirit, as the Son, became incarnate in dwelling in the flesh of Jesus Christ, whom God then rewarded by taking Him to heaven as His companion and counselor.<sup>2</sup> According to Hermas, the Son is Mediator of creation and preexistent before creation, as well as superior to the chief angels. The "name of the Son of God" implies complete transcendence and preexistence.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian Sibylline Oracles (ca. 150) asserted that the virgin birth of Jesus was no great miracle for "God the Father and God the Son."<sup>4</sup> About the same time, the Martyrdom of Polycarp (ca. 155) stated, "For Him we worship as the Son of God, but the martyrs we love as disciples," emphasizing clearly the unique honor due to Christ. In a manner reminiscent of Acts 3 and 4, the document reported that Polycarp "looked up to heaven and said, 'O Lord God Almighty, Father of thy beloved and blessed Child [pais], Jesus Christ.'"<sup>5</sup>

Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) confessed the deity of Christ repeatedly,<sup>6</sup> and he used the title "Son" or "Son of God" often.<sup>7</sup> "Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Hermas Similitudes 5. 5. 2; 5. 6. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5. 6. 5-7. He also speaks in 8. 11. 1 of "those who were called through His Son."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 9. 12. 1, 2, 7, 8; 9. 14. 5; cf. Grillmeier, pp. 42, 43, 50.

<sup>4</sup>Christian Sibylline Oracles 8. 472-73.

<sup>5</sup>Martyrdom of Polycarp 14. 1; 17. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Justin Martyr Dialogue 48. 267; 68. 293-94; 93. 323; 126. 355; 127. 357; cf. Bousset, pp. 323-24.

<sup>7</sup>Justin Martyr Apology, 1. 6, 12, 13, 22, 23, 58; 2. 6; Dialogue 43, 48, 102, 115, 116, 118, 127. Note also Apology 1. 46: "We have been

Christ," he wrote, "is the only proper Son who has been begotten by God, being His Word and first-begotten, and power. . . ." He relates the title directly to the messianic promise of 2 Samuel 7:14, "Nathan . . . speaking to David about Him . . . continued: 'I will be His Father, and He shall be my Son' . . . He is the chosen Priest and eternal King, the Christ, inasmuch as He is the Son of God." Later he calls Christ "Him who was according to His will His Son, being God."<sup>1</sup> It is evident that for Justin, Christ is the Son of God because He is both God and Messiah.

The so-called Alogoi (ca. 175) of Asia Minor rejected the Logos doctrine (John 1:1-18), the Johannine writings, and the eternal generation of Christ (what they called the "birth from above"). They taught instead that Christ was ordained at His baptism to be the Son of God.<sup>2</sup>

Irenaeus (ca. 180) used the Son of God title as a common name for Christ.<sup>3</sup> For example he used Romans 1:1-4 and Galatians 4:4 to prove that the son of Mary was not just a man named Jesus, but the Son of God Himself. He spoke a number of times of "the Son of God being made the Son of Man." He called Jesus "the God of all those things which have been formed, the only-begotten of the Father, Christ who was

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taught that Christ is the first-born of God."

<sup>1</sup>Justin Martyr Apology 1. 23; Dialogue 118, 127; cf. Apology 1. 58: "the devils put forward Marcion of Pontus, who is even now teaching men to deny that God is the maker of all things in heaven and on earth, and that the Christ predicted by the prophets is His Son . . . Christ His first-begotten"; 2. 6: "His Son, who alone is properly called Son, the Word, who also was with Him and was begotten before the works . . . is called Christ."

<sup>2</sup>Harnack, 3:17-18; cf. Epiphanius Against Heresies 51. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Irenaeus Against Heresies 3. 16. 1-5, 9; 3. 19. 1; 4. 10. 1, 6.

announced, and the Word of God, who became incarnate when the fulness of time had come, at which the Son of God had to become the Son of man." And he argued that "the Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning."<sup>1</sup> In the light of subsequent controversies, it is important to note that Irenaeus strictly maintained the personal distinction between the Father and the Son.<sup>2</sup>

Irenaeus' contemporary, Celsus (ca. 180), as cited by Origen, regarded the titles "God" and "Son of God" as identical. To Celsus, Christ was the God who was commonly addressed in prayer by the Christians.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that the Christians of the late second century used the Son of God title as virtually synonymous with deity.

Theodotus (ca. 190) was the originator of dynamic monarchianism. He taught that prior to baptism Jesus was an ordinary man. At his baptism, the Spirit, or Christ, descended on Him, and He became the Son of God.<sup>4</sup> Theodotus said that Jesus should not be called "God," though some of his followers taught that Jesus did become God through His resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

Two anonymous writings of the late second century show the continuing influence of the New Testament use of the title to indicate Christ's divine sonship. The Didache advised concerning baptism,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3. 16. 3, 7; 3. 18. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3. 6. 1; cf. Harnack, 2:263.

<sup>3</sup>Origen Against Celsus 2. 9, 30; 3. 41, 62; 4. 2; 5. 2; cf. Bousset, pp. 321, 329.

<sup>4</sup>Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 5. 28; cf. Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 1:333.

<sup>5</sup>Harnack, 3:21-22.

"Having first rehearsed all these things, 'baptize, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' in running water."<sup>1</sup> The Epistle to Diognetus, alluding to John 3:16, reads, "God loved mankind . . . to whom he sent his only-begotten Son."<sup>2</sup>

Theophilus (late second century) was probably the first writer to use the term "Triad" (Trinity) of the Godhead. He wrote that God begot the Logos before creation, "vomiting him forth . . . proceeding, first-born of all creation."<sup>3</sup>

Noetus was a leader of the modalistic monarchians at the end of the second century. According to Hippolytus, Noetus taught that insofar as the Father passively submitted to be born (as Jesus), He was by birth the Son of Himself. Noetus stated that the one who died on the cross was the one God and Father of all. The one God, in being born man, appeared as Son. God decided to be man, without giving up His divinity. God made Himself Son by assuming a body. The flesh changed the Father into the Son.<sup>4</sup> This "patripassianism" was not accepted by mainline Christianity.

Near the turn of the century Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155-220)

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<sup>1</sup>Didache 7.

<sup>2</sup>Epistle to Diognetus 10. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Theophilus Ad Autolyicum 2.

<sup>4</sup>Hippolytus Philosophoumena 9. 12; cf. Harnack, 3:64-68. Some modalistic monarchians taught that the man Jesus (the body) was the Son, but Christ (the Spirit) was the Father (Luke 1:35). That which was born (the flesh) should be called Son of God (cf. Tertullian Against Praxeas). The man is the Son, but the Spirit, which entered into the Son, is the Father. Callistus said, "For the Father, who is in the Son, deified the flesh, after he had assumed it, and united it with himself, and established a unity of such a nature that now Father and Son are called one God . . . the Father suffered in sympathy with the Son."

elevated the idea of the Logos as the highest principle in the proclamation of Christianity. He taught that the Logos was eternally with the Father as His Son. The being of the Son was the same as the being of the Father.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time Tertullian (ca. 160-215) taught that the Father, Son, and Spirit are one identical substance (substantia); this substance has been extended into three manifestations but is not divided.<sup>2</sup> For Tertullian, the deepest mystery of Christianity was that God has a Son. His Son exercises all the power of the one God. There is an inner unity in substance of Father, Son, and Spirit. The Son proceeds from the one substance of the Father and thus receives His own reality without being separated from God. The Son, he wrote, is not a "part" of the divine substance, but has a "share" in it. The Son is an effluence of the one divine substance. He is "Spirit of Spirit and God of God."<sup>3</sup> Tertullian also emphasized the distinctions within the Godhead, noting that the Father is one person and the Son is another: the three are "one thing, not one person."<sup>4</sup>

Tertullian was the first of the Latin authors to use the word trinitas as a technical term for the Trinity. He was also the first to use the term persona, saying that the Son is "another" than the Father

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<sup>1</sup>Clement of Alexandria Stromateis 7; Paidagogos 1; Exhortation to the Greeks 11; cf. J. F. Bethune-Baker, An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine, pp. 134-36.

<sup>2</sup>Tertullian Apology 21. 11-13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 21. 12; cf. Grillmeier, pp. 119-20; Bethune-Baker, pp. 138-44.

<sup>4</sup>Tertullian Against Praxeas 22; cf. idem Against Hermogenes 3; Harnack, 2:259.

in the sense of person, not substance, for distinction, not division.<sup>1</sup>

### Third century

In the controversies of the third through the fifth centuries the title Son replaced Logos as more suitable in describing the relationships of the divine Persons within the Godhead. The definition of Sonship became more precise. The term μονογενής led to the phrases "begotten not made" and "begotten before all ages" which were featured in the Nicene debates.<sup>2</sup> A more literal interpretation of the word "Son" resulted in taking the expression as referring to origin or generation.<sup>3</sup>

A major third century disruption was the growth of modalism. Praxeas (ca. 200) identified the Father with the Son, so that "the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> Somewhat later, Callistus (ca. 220) was accused by Hippolytus of teaching that "the Father is not one person and the Son another, they are one and the same. . . . That which is seen, which is man, is the Son, whereas the Spirit which dwells in the Son is the Father."<sup>5</sup>

Origen (ca. 185-254) developed a rather diverse Christology in

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<sup>1</sup>Tertullian Against Praxeas 2; 12; Johannes Quasten, Patrology, 2 vols., vol. 2: The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus, pp. 286, 325.

<sup>2</sup>Dunn, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>S. Herbert Bess, "The Term 'Son of God' in the Light of Old Testament Idiom," GrJ 6 (1965):16.

<sup>4</sup>Tertullian Against Praxeas 1; cf. Quasten, p. 285.

<sup>5</sup>Hippolytus Philosophoumena 9-19 passim. Hippolytus cited Callistus as saying that "the Father suffered with the Son." See further Quasten, p. 234.

which he apparently rejected an identity of essence between the Father and the Son, saying instead that the Son is of another essence or nature than the Father. He taught the distinct personality of the Son, His essential divinity, and His co-eternity with the Father, though he made Him an intermediary between God and the universe and referred to the unity of the Father and the Son as moral.<sup>1</sup>

Origen used the term "eternal generation" of the Son, but he apparently meant by this that the Son does not participate in the Father's primary essence; rather, he receives the communication of a secondary substance.<sup>2</sup> He employed the word ὁμοούσιος ("of one and the same substance"),<sup>3</sup> but he contrasted the Father with the Son by saying that the Father is utterly incomprehensible and transcendent, whereas His transcendence takes form in the Son, expressing an objective reality. The Son is the revelation of the Father and is His mediator toward the world.<sup>4</sup> The Scripture calls the man Jesus the Son of God because the divine Logos was closely united with the soul and body of

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<sup>1</sup>Origen De Oratone 15 and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup>William G. T. Shedd, A History of Christian Doctrine, 1:306-7; Origen De Oratone 15; idem De Principiis 2. 4-12.

<sup>3</sup>Origen In Hebraeis (fragment 24. 359). The term had earlier been used by Clement of Alexandria (Stromata 2. 16; 4. 13) and Irenaeus (Against Heresies 1. 5. 1) with different applications, and by Hippolytus (Apostolic Tradition 21. 11) in a baptismal creed. Cf. also Quasten, 2:78; Bess, "The Term 'Son of God,'" p. 16; and Shedd, 1:294. But see Harnack (3:35), who notes that according to Pamphilus, Origen taught that the Son of God was born of the very substance of God, of the same substance with the Father. Christ did not become a Son by adoption; He was a true Son by nature, generated by the Father Himself.

<sup>4</sup>Origen De Principiis 2. 6; 4. 14; cf. Grillmeier, p. 142.



Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Novatian (ca. 250) wrote the first major Western work on the Trinity (De Trinitate). He did not use the term trinitas in his argument, however, since he wanted to stress the unity of God and was afraid of being accused of ditheism.<sup>2</sup> His statements are typical of third-century theologians who were wrestling with the divine Sonship of Christ in a philosophical sphere:

The Son . . . since He is begotten of the Father, is always in the Father. . . . He is eternally in the Father; otherwise the Father were not always Father. At the same time, the Father is antecedent to Him, for the Father must be of necessity before the son. . . . the Son must be less than the Father . . . He has an origin, in that He is born . . . He is born of the Father, Who alone has no origin.<sup>3</sup>

Dionysius of Alexandria (ca. 260) strengthened the concept of the eternal sonship of Christ when he wrote that "there certainly was not a time when God was not the Father. . . . Since, therefore, the Father is eternal, the Son is also eternal."<sup>4</sup>

Paul of Samosata (ca. 268), however, taught that Jesus was Christ only from His baptism. In his view the idea that the man Jesus was by nature Son of God led to having two gods.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand he taught that there were actually two Sons of God: an eternal Son of God

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<sup>1</sup>Origen De Principiis 2. 6; 4. 31; idem Contra Celsum 2. 9; cf. Harnack, 2:371.

<sup>2</sup>Quasten, 2:227-29.

<sup>3</sup>Novatian De Trinitate 31.

<sup>4</sup>Athanasius De Sententia Dionysii 15. Dionysius was earlier accused of denying that the Son was eternal (*ibid.*, 14).

<sup>5</sup>Epiphanius Haereses 65; cf. Harnack, 3:43.

(Logos), and Jesus Christ in whom the Logos dwelt.<sup>1</sup> Quasten concludes that Paul held the views of monarchianism and modalistic adoptionism.<sup>2</sup>

#### Fourth century

The fourth century saw the Christianization of the Roman Empire and the beginning of ecumenical councils called to settle Christological controversies. The concept of the Trinity and of Christ's relationship to the Father was further refined. Lactantius (ca. 240-320) called Christ "God the Son," and wrote that Father and Son cannot be separated from one another. He taught that there is one understanding, one Spirit, and one substance in both Father and Son. Yet he maintained a distinction between them in the one God. He also said that the Son was preexistent, and born both before the world and in time.<sup>3</sup>

Arius (ca. 320) initiated possibly the greatest controversy of the period when he began to teach that if Christ is the "only begotten Son" of God, He must have had a beginning. Whatever is begotten of God must derive from a creative act, not from the being of God, he concluded. The Son therefore had a beginning of existence and is not co-eternal with the Father.<sup>4</sup> Arius denied that there is community of

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<sup>1</sup>Leontius De Sectis 3; cf. Hilary De Synodis 81. 86; Eusebius Historia Ecclesiastica 7. 29-30; Harnack, 3:45-46.

<sup>2</sup>Quasten, 2:141. Paul was accused of saying that Jesus Christ was an ordinary man. According to Leontius, instead of recognizing three persons in God, Paul gave the name of Son "to him who was purely man" (De Sectis 3. 3).

<sup>3</sup>Lactantius Divine Institutions 4. 8. 1; 4. 29. 1, 4; cf. Grillmeier, pp. 194-204.

<sup>4</sup>Arius Thalia, quoted in Athanasius Orationes contra Arianos 1, 3; De Synodis 15.

οὐσία ("being or essence") between Father and Son in the Trinity.<sup>1</sup> J.

F. Bethune-Baker analyzes Arius' argument as follows:

. . . he argued by the analogy of human experience that what was true of human fatherhood was true of the relation between God and His Son. In the case of human fatherhood there is priority of existence of the Father; therefore in regard to the Father and the Son there is such priority of existence of the Father. Therefore once there was no Son. Therefore he must at some time, however remote, have been brought into being . . . the Son therefore was created by the Father. . . . the Arians were convinced that the Son was not eternal and was a creature, though coming into existence before time and before all other creatures, and not like other creatures.<sup>2</sup>

With an emphasis on the impassibility of God, Arius taught that the Son is alien to the Father and dissimilar from Him. The Son was created or brought into being by the Father. He alone was created directly by the Father; everything else was created through Him.<sup>3</sup>

The Nicene Council (325) clarified the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son by stating that "the Son is begotten out of the essence [ οὐσία ] of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of Very God, begotten [ γεννηθέντα ] not made, consubstantial with the Father [ ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ ]."<sup>4</sup> The idea of eternal generation was suggested by the biblical terms "Son," "only begotten," and "first

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Cf. R. D. Williams, "The Logic of Arianism," *JThS* 34 (1983):56-81. Williams notes that "the Arian Son stands at the absolute summit of creaturehood" (p. 80).

<sup>2</sup>Bethune-Baker, pp. 158-60.

<sup>3</sup>Arius *Thalia*; cf. Grillmeier, pp. 228-32. Arius taught that the Son is totally separated from and different from the substance or nature of the Father. He is not truly God and not eternal. He is the perfect creature. Through God's grace and his progress he has become God. The Spirit was created by the Son and is subordinate to him (Athanasius *Orationes contra Arianos*; Harnack, 4:17-19).

<sup>4</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 1:29.

begotten," which the Nicene theologians took as literal and not metaphorical terms. They held that eternal generation indicates an offspring out of the eternal essence of God, the communication of an eternal essence. The Father and the Son are one nature and one being. Eternal generation, as the communication of the one eternal essence of deity by the first Person to the second Person, is an activity inherent and perpetual in the divine essence. The Father and the Son are on the same level of eternal and necessary existence, of one and the same essence or substance.<sup>1</sup>

The Nicene theologians held that the term "Son" is used in the Bible to denote the deity of the second Person of the Godhead. In support of this they appealed to Matthew 28:19 and Hebrews 1:8. Sonship, they concluded, implies sameness of nature.<sup>2</sup>

Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 265-339) insisted that the Son has His own hypostasis, that is, His own distinct existence. Although the Son was not created, He was begotten and therefore not eternal in the same

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<sup>1</sup>Shedd, 1:315-21.

<sup>2</sup>Athanasius Orationes contra Arianos 1. 58; De Decretis Synodi Nicaenae 22-23; De Synodis 53; cf. Shedd, 1:329-31. At the end of the creed, a repudiation of Arianism was added: "And those that say there was once when he [the Son of God] was not, and before he was begotten he was not, and that he came into being out of nothing, or assert that the Son of God is of a different essence [subsistence] or being, or created, or capable of change or alteration--the Catholic Church anathematizes" (Bethune-Baker, p. 170; John H. Leith, ed., Creeds of the Churches, p. 31). Dwyer says that "'God' in the Nicene creed is no longer solely the Father of Jesus Christ . . . but has become a name or designation which applies both to the Father and to the Logos or Son" (p. 58). He claims that though the Nicene Council asserted that the Son was fully divine (immutable and eternal), the bishops probably did not understand by this that the Logos was identical in substance with the Father.

sense as the Father.<sup>1</sup> He further taught that the Son exists as Son by participation in the Father's Godhead, filled with divinity from the source of divinity.<sup>2</sup>

Athanasius (ca. 296-373) was probably the most influential theologian of the fourth century in making a lasting impact on Christological orthodoxy. He taught that the Son is the eternal, perfect reflection of the Father, the image proceeding from the substance of the Father. To be "begotten" simply means to share by nature in the entire nature of the Father. The Son is co-eternal with the Father, is of the substance of the Father, is by His own nature "similarly constituted" as the Father. He has the same substance (being) in common with the Father, and constitutes a unity with the Father. There is only one divine hypostasis, which the Father and the Son possess. The Son is true God, inseparable from the Father. He has everything the Father has. He is ὁμοούσιος, of the same substance as the Father.<sup>3</sup> Athanasius wrote that the Son is not only "similar" to the Father, but, having come forth from Him, is equal to Him. The Son is

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<sup>1</sup>Eusebius Epistula ad Caesareens, quoted in Theodoret Historia Ecclesiastica 1:11; cf. Dwyer, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Eusebius De Ecclesiastica Theologia 1. 2; idem Demonstratio Evangelica 5. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Athanasius Orationes contra Arianos; cf. Harnack, 4:31-36. Athanasius wrote that "the Father is ever Father, and the Son is ever Son" (Contra Arianos 1. 23. 21). "The Son cannot be otherwise than begotten of the Father, and consequently, cannot be the Father; yet as being begotten of the Father, he cannot but be God; and as being God, he cannot but be one in essence with the Father; and therefore he and the Father are One . . ." (Contra Arianos 3. 4). "What is naturally begotten from anyone, and does not accrue to him from without, that, in the nature of things, is a son" (Defensio Fidei Nicaenae 3).

not separate from the substance of the Father.<sup>1</sup>

Against these more orthodox views, a number of teachers attempted to connect Christ's sonship with His Incarnation. Marcellus (ca. 335) stated that the idea of sonship should not be applied to the divine in Christ, but only to the incarnate person. He said that Logos, not Son, is used of the divine element in Christ. There was no Son until the Incarnation. He also indicated that the relation of sonship would disappear, since it was limited to the Incarnation.<sup>2</sup> Photinus (ca. 350), bishop of Sirmium, also taught that the Logos became Son at the Incarnation. He concluded that Christ was only Son of God in the sense that all Christians are. It was not possible to speak of the Son before His earthly birth, he said, because the Son did not have a personal existence as a distinct hypostasis of deity.<sup>3</sup> However, Photinus was condemned repeatedly by church councils, and he died in exile in 376.<sup>4</sup>

Ambrosiaster (ca. 375) strongly argued for the divinity of Christ as the preexistent Son of God. He noted that if Christ is no different from any other holy or inspired man, there is no point in saying He is the Son of God. But He is not like other holy men, which

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<sup>1</sup>Athanasius De Decretis 20. 1-5; idem Contra Arianos 3. 15; cf. Grillmeier, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup>Marcellus De Incarnatione et contra Arianos 10-21; idem Epistula ad Liberium 5-12; Eusebius Contra Marcellum 2. 4; cf. Bethune-Baker, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Athanasius De Synodis 26; Socrates Historia Ecclesiastica 2. 19; Ambrosiaster Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti 91. 4-13.

<sup>4</sup>Lydia A. Speller, "New Light on the Photinians: The Evidence of Ambrosiaster," JThS 34 (1983):101, 113.

is why He is called unicus. No holy man, he said, would dare to call himself filius dei ("Son of God"), but Christ did so because He was conscious of His birth and heavenly origin.<sup>1</sup>

Two other fourth-century writers are worth noting in regard to Christ's sonship. Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 375) composed a short (anti-Arian) creed concerning the Trinity, in which he called Christ "true Son of true Father" and "God the Son." He used the term "Trinity" several times, and said, "And thus neither was the Son ever wanting to the Father, nor the Spirit to the Son; but without variation and without change, the same Trinity abides ever."<sup>2</sup> His brother Basil (ca. 329-379) wrote that "the whole Son is in the Father and has all the Father in Himself. . . . the hypostasis of the Father is known in the form of the Son."<sup>3</sup>

According to Harnack, fourth-century Latin theology taught (following Tertullian and Cyprian) that Father, Son, and Spirit were Persons (personae) who possessed a common "property" (substantia). Christ as persona controlled a twofold "property," His divinity inherited from His Father and His humanity inherited from His mother.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ambrosiaster Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti 91. 6. Ambrosiaster based his views on such biblical texts as Deut. 6:13; John 1:1; 3:31-32; 16:26-30; Rom. 9:5; Gal. 1:12; Rev. 19:13. Cf. also Speller, "New Light on the Photinians," pp. 105-12.

<sup>2</sup>Gregory of Nyssa Exposition of Faith; cf. Rufinus Historia Ecclesiastica 7. 26; Quasten, 2:125.

<sup>3</sup>Basil Letters 38. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Harnack, 3:310.

### The Fifth through Nineteenth Centuries

During the next fifteen centuries, less attention was given by theologians and exegetes to the origin and precise meaning of the title "Son of God." The focus of controversy shifted to the personality and natures of Christ (culminating in the Council of Chalcedon) and then to issues of soteriology and ecclesiology.

#### Fifth century

Augustine (354-430) held to an orthodox view of Christ's sonship and divinity,<sup>1</sup> though he taught that Christ, in His humanity, was the adopted Son of God, that is, that the Son assumed man.<sup>2</sup> Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 430) wrote, "The generation of the Son did not precede His existence, but He always existed, and that by generation."<sup>3</sup> Nestorius (ca. 430), condemned by many as a heretic, nevertheless said that the designation Son refers to the preexistent Logos, the second Person of the Trinity, who became incarnate. He denied having taught that there were two Sons (divine and human).<sup>4</sup>

The Chalcedonian Definition (451), echoing the Nicene Creed, confessed "one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Same perfect in Godhead . . . truly God and truly man . . . homoousion with the Father according to the Godhead . . . begotten of the Father before ages

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, The History of Doctrines, 2 vols. in 1, 1:257-60.

<sup>2</sup>Augustine De Agone Christi 11. 12; 18. 20; 19. 21; 20. 22; cf. Harnack, 5:280.

<sup>3</sup>Cyril of Alexandria Thesaurus 5.

<sup>4</sup>Nestorius Liber Heraclidis; cf. Grillmeier, pp. 455-56.



according to the Godhead . . . Son, Lord, Only-begotten."<sup>1</sup>

### Medieval period

Muhammad (ca. 620) understood Christian Trinitarianism to require a belief in three gods. He identified these three gods as Allah, Mary, and Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The insistence in the Koran that Allah has no son represented a denial of the Christian reference to Jesus as the divine "Son of God."<sup>3</sup> It resulted from a misinterpretation of the title in a biological sense.<sup>4</sup>

According to Harnack the Greek concept of Christ's sonship during the seventh century was that in the Incarnation the Logos assumed human nature and received it into the unity of His being, so that it participated completely in the sonship of the Son. The incarnate Logos was thus in every respect as much the one real Son of God as was the preexistent Logos. This Greek concept rejected any "adoption" of Jesus' humanity as Son of God.<sup>5</sup> To the west, Elipandus (ca. 718-802) taught in Spain (ca. 790) that the eternal Son of God (Logos) adopted the humanity but not the person of Jesus, so that Christ became the adoptive Son ("the son adoptive in his humanity but not in his divinity"). For

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<sup>1</sup>Schaff, 2:62; cf. Leith, pp. 35-36; and A. N. S. Lane, "Christology beyond Chalcedon," in Christ the Lord, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Muhammad Koran 4:171; 5:19, 75-78, 116-19; 9:30-31. Cf. F. P. Cotterell, "The Christology of Islam," in Christ the Lord, p. 296.

<sup>3</sup>Koran 2:116; 17:111; 19:35; 39:6.

<sup>4</sup>F. F. Bruce, Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament, p. 173.

<sup>5</sup>Harnack, 5:279; cf. also Felix Heinzer, Gottes Sohn als Mensch, pp. 117-45.

Elipandus the sonship of Christ was twofold: He was Son by nature (as God) and He was Son by adoption and grace (as man).<sup>1</sup>

The Scholastic scholars for the most part merely reproduced in their Christology the traditional dogmas.<sup>2</sup> Anselm (ca. 1109) sought to prove the necessity of Christ's divinity from His sufferings and death. He refers to Christ's humanity only incidentally.<sup>3</sup> Abelard (ca. 1142) followed in substance the Christology of Augustine: one person in two substances or natures. He reproduced the orthodox formulas concerning the union of the divine and human natures of Christ, although he said that Christ is the man assumed by the Word (verbo), and He now fulfills the will of the divinity within Him. Christ did all things to please God. Abelard thus located the union of the divine and human natures in the sphere of Christ's will or person (and could perhaps be charged with Nestorianism).<sup>4</sup>

Peter Lombard (ca. 1158) taught that the second person of the Godhead assumed impersonal human nature--the flesh and soul, but not the person of a man. The Logos remained unchanged. God became man, since He had a human nature. The sufferings of Christ were limited to His human nature.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1270) argued that there is "divine

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<sup>1</sup>Alcuin Adversus Elipandum 4. 2; idem Adversus Felicem 1. 1-11; cf. Seeberg 2:27-28; Harnack, 5:283-84.

<sup>2</sup>Seeberg, 2:109.

<sup>3</sup>Anselm Cur deus homo? 2. 8-12; cf. Seeberg, 2:68-69.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Abelard, Introductio ad Theologiam 3; cf. Seeberg, 2:64-65.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Lombard Quatuor Libri Sententiarum 3. 5, 15.

generation," "paternity," and "sonship" in the divinity, so that Jesus is Son of God (based on Ps. 2:7; Matt. 11:27; etc.). He also concluded that "the Son of God, begotten of God, is God."<sup>1</sup> After attempting to clarify the meaning of such words as "diverse" and "other," Thomas wrote that "we cannot say that the Son is diverse from the Father, although he is other than the Father."<sup>2</sup> He argued compellingly that the Son is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father in essence, majesty, and power.<sup>3</sup>

Duns Scotus (ca. 1300) emphasized the human life of Christ more than many Scholastics. To him, the proposition that God became man was inaccurate, since the becoming was only an experience of the man, not of the Logos. More properly, the human nature was united personally with the Logos.<sup>4</sup>

### Reformation

The Reformers generally held quite orthodox views of Christ's sonship as divine and eternal. Martin Luther, in his German translation of the Bible, rendered "sons of God" by Kinder Gottes and "Son of God" by Sohn Gottes so as to make a theological distinction between the sonship of Christians and that of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Aquinas Summa Contra Gentiles 4. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup>Idem Summa Theologiae 1a. 31. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1a. 42.

<sup>4</sup>Duns Scotus Commentary on the Sentences 3. 6-7; cf. Seeberg, 2:154-55.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther, Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments, pp. 859-1128 passim; cf. G. Adolf Deissmann, Bible Studies, p. 73, n. 2. Harnack says that "Luther left behind him an unspeakable confusion as regards the significance of the old dogmas . . . Christ is not to him a divine Person, who has taken to Himself

John Calvin wrote extensively of Christ's divinity and the Trinity in his Institutes.<sup>1</sup> He understood the Son of God title as referring specifically to Christ's divine relation to the Godhead. He remarked that he would be happy to have all men agree "that Father and Son and Spirit are one God, yet the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are differentiated by a peculiar quality." He contended that the name Jehovah corresponds in its broad sense to Christ. He wrote that the church's belief is that Christ is the Son of God "because the Word begotten of the Father before all ages took human nature in a hypostatic union." Christ "is called Son of God by virtue of His deity and eternal essence."<sup>2</sup>

#### Nineteenth century

Perhaps the most complete presentation of the orthodox, biblical view of Christ's divine sonship during the nineteenth century was that of H. P. Liddon. His emphasis was on establishing the divinity of Christ, and his approach centered around Jesus' self-consciousness and the Gospel of John. Liddon did not attempt to meet the challenge of skeptical critics by appealing to history. He wrote that Jesus Christ, as God's only-begotten Son, is a partaker of the incommunicable and

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humanity, but the man Jesus Christ is the revelation of God Himself; and Father, Son and Spirit are not three Persons existing side by side, but one God and Father has opened His Fatherly heart to us in Christ and reveals Christ in our hearts by His Spirit" (7:242).

<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1. 13; 2. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1. 13. 5, 20; 2. 14. 5, 6. Calvin concluded that Christ was the Son of God before the creation of the world (2. 14. 5). He castigated Michael Servetus for denying that Christ is the Son of God "for any other reason than that he was begotten of the Holy Spirit in the virgin's womb" (2. 14. 5).

imperishable essence of God. He partakes of God's nature.

In the language of Church history, the Logos, if unbalanced by the idea of Sonship, might have seemed to sanction Sabellianism. The Son, without the Logos, might have been yet more successfully pressed into the service of Arianism. . . . Thus each metaphor reinforces, supplements, and protects the other. Taken together they exhibit Christ before His Incarnation as at once personally distinct from, and yet equal with, the Father.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the analysis of the Son of God title before the twentieth century was devoted to determining the relationship of Christ to the Father and the point in Christ's career that He actually became or was designated Son of God. John F. Walvoord has listed seven diverse theories: (1) Christ became God's Son through His incarnation; (2) Jesus was adopted as God's Son at His baptism; (3) Jesus was installed as God's Son at His resurrection; (4) Christ became Son when He was exalted to God's right hand at His ascension; (5) Christ was a Son only in the sense of bearing the title or holding the office of Sonship; (6) Christ assumed the office of Son as part of an eternal covenant between equal members of the Godhead; and (7) Christ is eternally the Son of God by eternal generation. The last view appears to be the view propounded by the early church councils, and is derived biblically especially from the writings of Paul, John, and the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. P. Liddon, The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, pp. 234-35; cf. I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology, pp. 14-15; John M. Creed, The Divinity of Jesus Christ, pp. 75-79.

<sup>2</sup>John F. Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, pp. 39-42. Cf. Ps. 2:7; John 1:49; 3:16-18, 35-36; 11:27; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:2, 5, 8; 5:5; 1 John 2:23; 5:9-12. See also Dunn, pp. 23-24; Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament, pp. 9-30.

### The Twentieth Century

During the nineteenth century New Testament critics increasingly tended to separate Pauline Christology from that of Jesus Himself. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Adolf Harnack went so far as to say that "the Gospel, as Jesus proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only and not with the Son." He attributed to Paul the "speculative idea" that Christ Himself had a unique heavenly nature.<sup>1</sup> Harnack taught that "the name of Son means nothing but the knowledge of God." Based on Matthew 11:27, he wrote that Jesus was convinced that He knew God in a way in which no one ever knew Him before, and thus He knew Himself to be the Son.<sup>2</sup>

William Wrede (1904) wrote that the apostle Paul transferred to Jesus the concept of the Messiah that was familiar to him as a Jew, without having been much influenced by Jesus' person and teaching. He concluded that Paul believed in a celestial Son of God, a divine Christ, before he believed in Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Otto Pflleiderer (1905) is typical of early twentieth-century critics who have seen an evolution in the meaning of the Son of God title in the early church. He wrote that the title first signified the adoption of the man Jesus to sonship either at His resurrection or at His baptism; then the apostle Paul taught that Jesus was the Son of God as a preexistent spiritual personality who became incarnate in Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Adolf Harnack, What Is Christianity? pp. 144, 185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 128-45; cf. Werner G. Kümmel, The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems, pp. 183, 433.

<sup>3</sup>William Wrede, Paul, pp. 151-53; Kümmel, pp. 295-97, 446.

Christ (supplemented by John's Logos Christology); and finally in the second century among Gentile Christians arose the idea that Jesus was also Son of God physically in that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.<sup>1</sup>

In 1906 Albert Schweitzer showed that the nineteenth-century quest of the historical Jesus had failed.<sup>2</sup> James M. Robinson, however, claims that this quest is continuing in English and American scholarship.<sup>3</sup>

Wilhelm Bousset (ca. 1913) belonged to the "History of Religions" school of thought, which attributed the source of most early Christian religious ideas to pagan influences. In Kyrios Christos he argued that the Hellenistic Gentile Christian communities in Syria and Tarsus filtered (with Hellenistic additions) the Christianity which Paul subsequently received. He concluded that the ministry of Jesus as represented in the Gospels is a reshaping of traditions by the early church. He used form criticism to explain many of the miracles and sayings of Jesus as fictional additions. Bousset attempted to approach Christology historically without reference to the supernatural. In fact he worked with an antisupernatural bias and perceived religious parallels as influences on Christianity. His work, however, greatly influenced the course of subsequent scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Pflleiderer, The Early Christian Conception of Christ, pp. 16-19.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Bousset, *passim*; Marshall, pp. 16-18.

Bousset concluded that the Son of God title was not used by Jesus or by Palestinian Jewish Christians, but rather that it came into use in the church through Paul, who received his Christianity from Hellenistic Gentile Christians. He claimed that Son of God was not a Jewish title for the Messiah.<sup>1</sup> But he admitted in 1916 that his conclusion that the Son of God title was not used in the Palestinian church might be wrong.<sup>2</sup>

Friedrich Büchsel (1928) defended the historicity and eyewitness nature of the Gospel of John, and wrote that the designation of Jesus as the Son of God goes back to Jesus Himself, from whom John received it.<sup>3</sup>

Rudolf Bultmann, following Bousset, concluded that Jesus did not refer the Son of God title to Himself.<sup>4</sup> Against Bousset, however, he said that the Son of God title was used in the Palestinian church as a messianic or royal title. He found evidence for this in the pre-Pauline form of Romans 1:3-4 and in the Transfiguration story. He wrote that "the earliest Church called Jesus Son of God (messianic) because that was what the resurrection made him."<sup>5</sup> In the Hellenistic church, the

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<sup>1</sup>Bousset, pp. 52-57, 151; I. Howard Marshall, "The Development of Christology in the Early Church," TynB 18 (1967):80-81.

<sup>2</sup>B. M. F. Van Iersel, "Der Sohn" in den synoptischen Jesusworten, p. 10. Bousset made a major distinction between the Palestinian Jewish church and the Hellenistic church.

<sup>3</sup>D. Friedrich Büchsel, Johannes und der hellenistische Synkretismus, BFCT, pp. 20-21.

<sup>4</sup>Rudolf K. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 1:26-27. His disciples Ernst Käsemann ("The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in Essays on New Testament Themes, pp. 43-44) and Günther Bornkamm (Jesus of Nazareth, p. 172) agreed with Bultmann's conclusion. Cf. Willi Marxsen, The Beginnings of Christology, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Bultmann, 1:50.



title developed further to refer to Jesus' divinity, from three sources: the Hellenistic idea of divine men, the belief in "son-divinities," and the Gnostic myth of a divine redeemer.<sup>1</sup> In the end, however, the form-critical research of Bultmann tended to confirm the view that a quest of the historical Jesus is impossible, and his existential theology indicated that such a quest is illegitimate.<sup>2</sup>

Walter Grundmann (1938) concluded that Jesus claimed a general "sonship" for Himself which He shared with His disciples. This truth was distorted by the Gospel writers, who turned the term Son of God into an honorific title for Jesus, with a primarily Hellenistic meaning.<sup>3</sup>

William Manson (1946) wrote that the Son of God title arose as the Christian equivalent of the Jewish term Messiah, originating from Jesus' own view of His filial relation to God and the messianic use of the term in the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup>

Form criticism dominated New Testament studies during the first half of the twentieth century. But form criticism could only reach back

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:128-33. Bultmann followed Bousset in seeing Mark's Son of God as basically a Hellenistic figure. On Gentile soil, the Jewish-messianic view of the Son of God was changed into the Hellenistic figure of a divinely empowered miracle worker. The accession to sonship was transferred from the resurrection to the beginning of Jesus' ministry--His baptism, when He received the divine Spirit which enabled Him to perform supernatural deeds (Lewis S. Hay, "The Son-of-God Christology in Mark," JBR 32 [1964]:106-7; cf. Bultmann, 1:131; Bousset, pp. 65-70).

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, p. 12. For a description of some other contemporary theological approaches to Christ's sonship (particularly those of Barth, Tillich, and Elert), see Carl H. Ratschow, Jesus Christus, pp. 76-77, 119-21, 135-37, 183-85, 222-23.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Grundmann, Die Gotteskindschaft in der Geschichte Jesu und ihre religionsgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen, pp. 49-53, 135-36.

<sup>4</sup>William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, pp. 146-54.

to the early Christian community, and therefore had nothing to say about the beliefs or history of Jesus Himself. When Bultmann taught that the early Christian community was responsible for the beliefs and tendencies attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, he presupposed his result, since in his method he set aside all passages that contain what he thought were later tendencies and allowed to stand only those that do not contain such tendencies.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, form criticism led to pessimism concerning the possible success of the historical study of Jesus and His self-understanding. An address by Ernst Käsemann in 1953 on "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" to a meeting of Bultmannians set in motion a new quest of the historical Jesus, to determine whether the proclamation of Christ in the early church had any continuity with the preaching of Jesus Himself. Käsemann's view has since been advocated by various segments of German theology, both Bultmannian and non-Bultmannian, and by Roman Catholics and Scandinavians, among others.<sup>2</sup> James M. Robinson says that much of current New Testament research has had a significant deficiency: it sees Jesus only in terms of the Christian kerygma, and obscures the concreteness of His historical reality. He concluded that a new quest of the historical Jesus is necessary because of the contemporary state of theology.<sup>3</sup>

Significant advances have been made in New Testament study since the middle of the twentieth century. Vincent Taylor was a Methodist

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<sup>1</sup>Marxsen, pp. 25-30.

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, pp. 12-14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-86.

minister and professor who wrote a number of books on the New Testament presentation of Jesus. Though he used a basically redaction-critical approach, he held firmly to Jesus' consciousness of divine sonship. About 1955 he concluded that "all the Gospels affirm the divine Sonship of Jesus." The Son of God in Paul stands in "the closest metaphysical relationship to God." In John, Christ is the divine Son of God in a relationship of being and nature. Taylor wrote that the idea of divine sonship goes back to Jesus Himself. He insisted that Jesus is the Son of God in an essential sense, as seen both in the mind of Jesus and in the thought of the early church.<sup>1</sup>

Oscar Cullmann (ca. 1957), though he accepted the historical-critical methods of the more skeptical critics, came to conclusions similar to those of Taylor. He concluded that Jesus Himself laid the foundations of Christology by His claims and actions. The titles applied to Jesus are generally traced to the Old Testament or to Jesus' own words. Cullmann, insisted, however, that New Testament Christology was essentially functional rather than ontological (emphasizing Jesus as Savior). He argued that the origin of the Son of God title lay with Jesus, who thus expressed His self-consciousness as the suffering servant who was one with God in obedience.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent Taylor, The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching, pp. 22, 31, 47, 103, 186, 197. Marshall notes that Taylor failed to deal sufficiently with the period between Christ's resurrection and the earliest New Testament documents (Origins, p. 22).

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, pp. 270-305. Cf. W. R. G. Loader, "The Apocalyptic Model of Sonship," JBL 97 (1978):525; Marshall, Origins, pp. 22-24. According to Hay ("The Son-of-God Christology in Mark," p. 107) Cullmann sees Mark's Son of God as God's Servant, chosen to bring redemption to men by His suffering and death. It is in His obedience to the will of the Father that Jesus

The Gnostic Redeemer myth was commonly used as a background and parallel for New Testament Christology during the 1940s and 1950s, but since then it has practically disappeared from use, since it cannot be found in any pre-Christian text or in the Nag Hammadi texts. The "Divine Man" concept has now taken its place. But this approach has also been seriously challenged, and Otto Betz now notes that the term theios aner is quite rare in Hellenistic literature, questioning whether one should even speak of a Hellenistic "Divine Man."<sup>1</sup>

Jack Kingsbury has described two major phases of the Divine Man approach. The first extended from William Wrede (1901) to Willi Marxsen (1956). The second extends from the end of the 1950s to the present. In the first phase, a number of scholars attributed to the Gospel writers, especially Mark, an intentional portrayal of Jesus as a Hellenistic wonder-worker. In the second phase, many have concluded that Mark actually attempted to combat and reinterpret the Divine Man Christology of his sources by emphasizing Christ's sufferings. Other scholars have rejected the Divine Man parallel altogether.<sup>2</sup>

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shows that He is God's Son. Jesus as the Messiah is the individual in whom the elect of God are all represented. The motivation behind the Son of God title in Mark is the consciousness and claims of Jesus Himself. Jesus was fully aware of His unique relation to God and disclosed this to His disciples.

<sup>1</sup>Otto Betz, "The Concept of the So-called 'Divine Man' in Mark's Christology," in Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 229, 232.

<sup>2</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?" Interp 35 (1981):244-49; idem, The Christology of Mark's Gospel, pp. 2-23. William Wrede said that the Marcan Jesus received a supernatural nature through which He performed miracles and imparted divine wisdom (The Messianic Secret, pp. 71-82). Willi Marxsen agreed with Rudolf Bultmann (The History of the Synoptic Tradition, pp. 346-48) that Mark's view of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son

Werner Kramer (1963) identified three pre-Pauline traditions using the Son of God title, relating to exaltation, the parousia, and the sending of the Son. But he made almost no attempt to show relationships between these motifs.<sup>1</sup>

Ferdinand Hahn's book on The Titles of Jesus in Christology (1969) must rank as one of the five most important recent works on biblical Christology. He has already had a profound influence on German scholars.<sup>2</sup> He distinguishes three stages of development between Jesus and most of the New Testament: (1) the Palestinian Jewish church, (2) the Hellenistic Jewish church, and (3) the Hellenistic Gentile church. The distinguishing characteristic of each stage is the degree of Jewish or non-Jewish influence. Hahn concludes that the titles were at first applied to Jesus with reference to His return (parousia), and only later with regard to His resurrection and exaltation. The Hellenistic Jewish church first used such titles as Lord and Christ of the risen and

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of God, was the same as that of Paul (Mark the Evangelist, pp. 213-16). Since the 1950s some have claimed that Mark adopted the Hellenistic divine-man Christology, thereby holding a Christology that is inferior to that of Paul or John. Others (e.g., Hans-Dieter Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," in Jesus and the Historian, pp. 121-25) state that Mark attempted to combat and reinterpret the divine-man Christology by emphasizing instead the suffering and death of Jesus. A number of scholars have suggested that Mark had to correct his tradition's false picture of Jesus as divine man, by emphasizing the Son of Man title, playing down the divine-man connotations of the Son of God title, and emphasizing the necessity of suffering. Still others have argued strongly against the divine-man approach (cf. Carl H. Holladay, Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism; David L. Tiede, The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker).

<sup>1</sup>Werner Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, pp. 108-26.

<sup>2</sup>Cf., for example, the references to Hahn in Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man. For a thorough criticism of Hahn's approach, however, see Philipp Vielhauer, "Zur Frage der christologischen Hoheitstitel," ThLZ 90 (1965):569-88.

exalted Jesus, and later the Hellenistic Gentile church applied the titles to the divinity of Christ even during His earthly life. Hahn claims that the same process occurred with regard to the Son of God title, being understood first functionally and only later related to ideas of His conception and preexistence.<sup>1</sup>

Hahn distinguished two primary usages of the title: (1) "the Son of God," signifying royal messianic status, first applied to Jesus by the Hellenistic Jewish Christian communities after Easter; and (2) "the Son," which originated in the use of "Abba" by Jesus for God as His Father.<sup>2</sup>

Reginald H. Fuller (1965), though indebted to Hahn, adopted a different procedure. He first discussed supposed background and parallels to the titles of Jesus in each of Hahn's three stages, then investigated the development in the meaning of each title as it was used in the early church during each of the stages. He claimed that Jesus understood His mission to be centered around eschatological prophecy and a present saving action of God through Him. Like Hahn, Fuller saw a development of Christology in the early church from a focus on Jesus' return to a belief in His divine preexistence and Incarnation. He also

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<sup>1</sup>Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, pp. 279-333. Some have elaborated Hahn's three divisions into five: (1) Jewish Christianity at Jerusalem (exhibited by James); (2) Hellenistic missionary Jewish Christianity (Stephen and Philip); (3) Palestinian missionary Jewish Christianity (Peter); (4) Palestinian apocalyptic Jewish Christianity; and (5) the Johannine school (cf. François Vouga, "Pour une Géographie Théologique des Christianismes Primitifs," Études Théologiques et Religieuses 59 [1984]:141-49). These schemes all suffer from the impossibility of separating so sharply the various movements, areas, leaders, and periods of early Christianity.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

emphasized Jewish wisdom speculation and the wise man as "son of God" in the Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>1</sup>

Fuller admits that New Testament Christology is not purely functional. Action implies prior being. He notes that the "Gentile mission" made ontological statements about Jesus (e.g., John 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:6-8). What the early Church councils did, he explains, was to take the ontological statements of the New Testament and explain them in ontological language derived from Greek (*οὐσία, ὁμοούσιος, etc.*) and Latin (*substantia, persona, etc.*) philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

Eduard Schweizer classified usages of the Son of God title in six categories: its use by Jesus with "Abba," the Davidic use, the eschatological use, the sending of the preexistent Son, the miraculous divine man, and the suffering righteous one.<sup>3</sup>

Martin Hengel put to rest many of the old "History of Religions" speculations about the origin of the Son of God title in pagan Hellenism and speculative Judaism with his 1975 book, The Son of God. He concluded that the title had four major sources for the early church: (1) Jesus' unique relationship with God, expressed in His use of the address "Abba"; (2) the messianic use of the title in the Old Testament;

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<sup>1</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology; cf. Marshall, Origins, pp. 27-28; Loader, "The Apocalyptic Model of Sonship," pp. 525-26. Fuller concluded that Romans 1:3-4 belongs to the Palestinian stage. In the Hellenistic Gentile church Jesus was divinized, and was thought of as the preexistent Son of God. The title thus became an expression of His divine nature for the first time (Fuller, pp. 164-232 passim).

<sup>2</sup>Fuller, pp. 247-49. He remarks that "encounter with Jesus is encounter not only with God in revelatory-redemptive action, but encounter with his being" (p. 248).

<sup>3</sup>TDNT, s.v. "υἱός," by Eduard Schweizer, 8 (1972):363-89.

(3) the Son of Man self-identification by Jesus; and (4) the fact that the Hebrew word עֲבָדָה ("servant") could be translated παῖς and then interpreted as "Son" or "Child." Nevertheless he decided that the full Son of God Christology of the New Testament was a creation of the early Christian community, and that the title was basically an expression of the exaltation of Jesus. For Paul, the title became a way of describing his gospel.<sup>1</sup>

I. Howard Marshall (1976) has presented an orthodox view of Christology and called into question many of the presuppositions of recent critical scholarship concerning Christology in the early church. He attacked as unproven the common assumption that Jesus proclaimed no Christology for Himself. He concluded that there was no discontinuity between the statements of Jesus about Himself and the later proclamation of the church.<sup>2</sup>

James Dunn (1980), seeking to determine the origin of the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation, has concluded that the early church's understanding of Jesus as the Son of God did not include the concepts of incarnation and preexistence. He says that the Christology of a preexistent Son of God becoming man emerged only in the final decades of the first century (particularly in John). He claims that the New Testament contains a diversity of sonship christologies. But he also admits that the use of Psalm 2:7, the stories of the voice from heaven, and the birth narratives do not constitute a denial of Christ's preexistent sonship. Luke, he notes, included several "christologically

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, pp. 41-76 passim, 91.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, Origins.



decisive moments" (conception and birth, baptism, resurrection) in his presentation of Jesus' life and ministry.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, Donald Guthrie, in his extensive New Testament Theology (1981), has carried the conservative viewpoint forward by showing that the title Son of God owes its origin and meaning more to Jesus' consciousness of a unique relationship to the Father than to any Hellenistic or Jewish model. He analyzes the use of the title in the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine literature, Acts, Paul, and Hebrews, while showing a thorough knowledge of most recent critical debate on the issue.<sup>2</sup>

#### Conclusion

Recent scholarly interest in the Son of God title has concentrated on the "pre-Pauline" period (ca. 30-50), and has generally assumed a three-stage development of Christology as the church expanded.<sup>3</sup> A major hindrance to further study is the unfounded assumption on the part of many that the Gospels contain mostly unauthentic sayings of Jesus, and therefore that the Christology of the Gospels reflects the thinking of the early church rather than the statements of Jesus Himself.

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<sup>1</sup>Dunn, pp. 62-64.

<sup>2</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, pp. 301-21.

<sup>3</sup>For a more thorough treatment of recent discussion of the Son of God title, see Van Iersel, pp. 3-28; and E. G. Jay, Son of Man--Son of God, pp. 52-97.

PART II

THE ANCIENT USE OF THE TITLE "SON OF GOD"

OUTSIDE THE NEW TESTAMENT

### CHAPTER III

#### THE TITLE "SON OF GOD" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The word "son" occurs about 4,870 times in the Old Testament, and is there the most common term of relationship.<sup>1</sup> However, the actual phrase "the Son of God" is not found in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup>

Ancient Near Eastern peoples often believed that the ruling family of a nation traced its line back to a god.<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian pharaohs often spoke of themselves as the sons of Ra or Amon. The Sumerians and Babylonians addressed their gods as "the god who has begotten me" or "father, who begets gods and men." Babylonians probably thought of themselves as being under the special protection of their gods, or as having been made by a god. In all Near Eastern cosmogonies, "man is ultimately begotten of the gods by some kind of physical generation or production."<sup>4</sup> But the divine sonship concept in the Old Testament was not borrowed from these religions.

As Adolf Deissmann admitted, it is "very highly probable" that the designation of Christ as the Son of God has its roots at least to

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<sup>1</sup>TDNT, s.v. "υἱός," by Georg Fohrer, 8 (1972):340.

<sup>2</sup>A. Lukyn Williams, The Hebrew-Christian Messiah, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup>John L. McKenzie, "The Divine Sonship of Men in the Old Testament," CBO 7 (1945):337.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

some degree in an Old Testament form of expression.<sup>1</sup> William Tyler notes, however, that in most of the passages in the Old Testament where someone is called a son of God, the title occurs in the plural ("sons"), or if in the singular, it lacks the definite article (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:14, "He shall be to me a son"). Where the title is applied to rulers and angels, it is not only plural, but it also is found only in poetical books such as Job and Psalms, and is thus the language of poetry.<sup>2</sup> In such places, he says, the title expresses the person's high rank or his relationship and resemblance to God.<sup>3</sup>

#### Physical Sonship

In the great majority of cases, the word "son" has the literal sense of offspring or descendant. The Hebrew term  $\text{בֶּן}$  primarily means the "son" begotten by the father and born of the mother.<sup>4</sup> The plural "sons" can mean "young men" or "children" (cf. Gen. 3:16; 21:7; Deut. 4:10; Prov. 7:7).<sup>5</sup>

There is little or no evidence for the practice of adoption in the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> Roland de Vaux defines adoption as "an act by which

<sup>1</sup>G. Adolf Deissmann, Bible Studies, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>William S. Tyler, "The Son of God," BS 22 (1865):622.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 621.

<sup>4</sup>S. Herbert Bess, "The Term 'Son of God' in the Light of Old Testament Idiom," GrJ 6 (Spring 1965):17. In the LXX the usual Greek rendering of  $\text{בֶּן}$  is  $\text{υἱός}$ , although  $\text{τέκνον}$  is used 134 times and  $\text{παῖδόν}$  19 times. The Aramaic equivalent  $\text{בֶּן}$  occurs 19 times.

<sup>5</sup>Fohrer, p. 345.

<sup>6</sup>Gerald Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God," ZAW 73 (1961):215.

a man or woman acknowledges a person of different blood as his or her son or daughter, with the legal rights and duties of a true child."<sup>1</sup> But the Old Testament contains no adoption laws.<sup>2</sup> Nor is there any example of an actual adoption in the strict sense (Gen. 16:2; 30:3-8; 48:5; 50:23; Exod. 2:10; Ruth 4:16-17; 1 Kings 11:20; Esther 2:7, 15 are not true, full adoptions). The adoption of a son from outside the family circle was never utilized to secure the coveted male heir. The only acceptable substitute was for the father to produce his own heir through a slave or a concubine (cf. Gen. 30:3). Adoption, on the other hand, means that "one who is not a son by birth may be given the privileges and responsibilities of sonship."<sup>3</sup>

Gerald Cooke believes that Numbers 11:12; Ruth 4:16-17; and Psalm 27:10 provide a picture of something similar to adoption in which another person's child was taken "into one's bosom" and treated as one's own. He concludes that "a relationship was known to the Hebrews which was for all practical purposes concerning the parties involved an adoptive relationship."<sup>4</sup>

The Old Testament does refer to the legitimation of children (cf. Gen. 16:2; 30:3; 48:12; 50:23; Ruth 4:16-17).<sup>5</sup> The strict concept

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<sup>1</sup>Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, 2 vols., vol. 1: Social Institutions, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Lyall, Slaves, Citizens, Sons, pp. 70-81; cf. George Horowitz, The Spirit of Jewish Law, pp. 259-65; David R. Mace, Hebrew Marriage, pp. 201-20.

<sup>3</sup>Cooke, p. 215.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 215-16.

<sup>5</sup>Fohrer, p. 344.

of adoption was known (e.g., in the laws of Hammurabi), but it had little influence on daily life.<sup>1</sup>

In Israel sonship was understood in terms of obedience, as reflected in the Decalogue: "Honor your father and your mother" (Exod. 20:12).<sup>2</sup> The father-son relationship involved favor, care, love, and authority on the part of the father, and obedience on the part of the son. As Fuller notes, "by obedient submission to the father's will, the son becomes a perfect reproduction of his father at every point."<sup>3</sup>

#### Figurative Sonship

The term "son" often means "belonging to someone or something" (e.g., a "son of man" is a man or human being; a "son of a foreign land" is a stranger).<sup>4</sup> The word is sometimes used as a term of submission to a superior (e.g., Ben-hadad to Elisha [2 Kings 8:9], Ahaz to Tiglath-pileser [2 Kings 16:7]).<sup>5</sup> Hengel concludes that the term usually expresses subordination, so that when used of divine sonship, it means "belonging to God."<sup>6</sup>

Many times the word "son" is used figuratively to indicate a

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<sup>1</sup>De Vaux, p. 52. He believes, however, that Ps. 2:7 seems to use a formula of adoption.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis S. Hay, "The Son-of-God Christology in Mark," JBR 32 (1964):109.

<sup>3</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup>Arie de Kuiper and Barclay M. Newman, Jr., "Jesus, Son of God-- A Translation Problem," BiTr 28 (1977):433.

<sup>5</sup>C. F. D. Moule, The Origin of Christology, pp. 27-28, n. 31.

<sup>6</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, p. 21.

person's character, profession, status, or circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Bess lists a number of examples: (1) showing membership in a profession or guild—sons of the prophets (1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3; Amos 7:14), sons of oil (Zech. 4:14, priests), son of the perfumers (Neh. 3:8), son of the goldsmiths (Neh. 3:31), sons of the gate-keepers (Ezra 2:42), and sons of the troop (2 Chron. 25:13); (2) showing participation in a state or condition—sons of the exile (Ezra 4:1; 6:19), son of a foreign country (Gen. 17:12, 27; Exod. 12:43, foreigner), sons of pledges (2 Kings 14:14, hostages), sons of affliction (Prov. 31:5), sons of passing away (Prov. 31:8, orphans), sons of death (1 Sam. 20:31; Ps. 79:11, condemned men); (3) showing a certain character—son of valor (1 Sam. 14:52, a brave man), son of wise ones (Isa. 19:11), sons of rebellion (Num. 17:10), sons of wickedness (Ps. 89:23; 2 Sam. 3:34; 7:10), son of murder (2 Kings 6:32), sons of foolishness (Job 30:8), sons of no name (Job 30:8, disreputable children), son of smiting (Deut. 25:2, one who deserves to be beaten), sons of worthlessness (Deut. 13:13; 1 Sam. 25:17), and sons of tumult (Jer. 48:45); (4) possessing a certain nature—son of man (Num. 23:19; Job 16:21; 25:6; 35:8; Pss. 8:4; 80:17; Ezek. 2--4).<sup>2</sup>

New Testament examples of the same nonliteral use of "son" can be found in Mark 3:17 (sons of thunder), Luke 10:6 (sons of peace), John 17:12 (son of perdition), Acts 4:36 (son of encouragement), Galatians

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<sup>1</sup>Bess, p. 17. Fohrer notes that "son" can express formal relationship, referring to a member of a society, group, or fellowship. It can also denote membership of a people, country, place, group, or guild, and can denote sharing a nature, quality, or fate (pp. 345-46). Cf. *TDOT*, s.v. "בן," by H. Haag, 2 (1975):151-53.

<sup>2</sup>Bess, pp. 17-18.

3:7 (sons of Abraham), and Ephesians 2:2 (sons of disobedience). Bess says that "the New Testament uses the idiom in the same way as the Old Testament, especially when indicating nature or character."<sup>1</sup> From this he concludes that the title "Son of God," as applied to Jesus Christ, means "possessing the nature of, or displaying the qualities of, God."<sup>2</sup> The Jews understood that when Jesus called God His Father and Himself God's Son, He was making Himself equal with God (cf. John 5:18; 10:28-36). His enemies thus understood that when Jesus said He was the Son of God He was claiming to be of the nature of God and thus equal with God (cf. also Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:70; John 19:7).<sup>3</sup> How well this view explains and correlates with the biblical and extrabiblical data will be analyzed in this and succeeding chapters.

#### Supernatural Beings

Angels are designated "sons of God" in Job 1:6; 2:1; 33:7; Psalm 29:1; 89:6; and possibly in Deuteronomy 32:8; Psalm 82:6; and Daniel 3:25.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this designation is not clear. Guthrie says that it denotes their spiritual nature.<sup>5</sup> Others have suggested that angels are called "sons of God" because (1) they are in the same genus with God, (2) they are subordinate deities, (3) they are identified with the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19. A similar idiom occurs in 1 Peter 3:6 (daughters of Sarah).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>See Vincent Taylor, The Names of Jesus, p. 52; James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, p. 302.



false gods of the pagans, or (4) they are creatures of God and thus His offspring.<sup>1</sup>

John McKenzie concludes that the angels are characteristically ministers of the will of God—Yahweh's company—much as the "sons of the prophet" were the company of the prophet. Thus the angelic "sons of God," rather than having a special likeness to God or His nature, were given this title as an expression of their close association with God in carrying out His will.<sup>2</sup> Cole adds that the relationship may have the sense of "sender and sent one."<sup>3</sup>

Fohrer and Haag claim that the term in Genesis 6:2; Psalms 29:1; 82:6; 89:6; Job 38:7 refers to an ancient belief in a pantheon of gods under the supreme God (Yahweh), which was later subordinated to faith in Yahweh so that the gods became His angels.<sup>4</sup> Such an understanding is unnecessary, however, and it is clear that the idea of a physical father-son relationship between God and angels (or other divine beings) is alien to the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup> The "sons of God" are never referred to individually as "son," and God is never called their "Father."<sup>6</sup> Hebrews

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<sup>1</sup>John L. McKenzie, "The Divine Sonship of the Angels," CBO 5 (1943):297.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 299-300.

<sup>3</sup>ZPEB, s.v. "Son of God," by R. Alan Cole, 5:480.

<sup>4</sup>Fohrer, p. 347; Haag, pp. 157-59. Alan Richardson says that the angels are "sons of God" in the old mythological concept (An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, p. 148). Their obedience is of supreme importance.

<sup>5</sup>Fohrer, p. 348.

<sup>6</sup>Cooke, p. 216. Nor are they ever called "sons of Yahweh," but only "sons of God" (Elohim, etc.) or "sons of the Most High."

1:5 points out that no individual angel was ever called the Son of God.<sup>1</sup>

The difficult reference to the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" in Genesis 6:2 has been much debated. The identification of these beings as angels was made at least as early as the second century B.C.<sup>2</sup> The early church fathers and writers held the same view.<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that in Job (1:6; 2:1; 38:7) the Septuagint translates "sons of God" as "angels of God," whereas in Genesis and the Psalms it retains the term "sons."<sup>4</sup>

The Old Testament nowhere suggests that the Israelite king was thought to be included among the "sons of God" as a supernatural being.<sup>5</sup> There is also no indication that the application of this term to angels influenced New Testament Christology.<sup>6</sup>

#### Israel

God is spoken of as father fifteen times in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:6; 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Pss. 68:5; 89:26; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10).<sup>7</sup> He is compared

<sup>1</sup>Cf. William Barclay, Jesus As They Saw Him, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jubilees 4. 15, 22; 5. 1-10; 7. 21-22; 10. 1-11; Ethiopic Enoch 6-16, 19, 86; Slavonic Enoch 18; Testament of Reuben 5. See also T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup>James M. Vosté, "The Title 'Son of God' in the Synoptic Gospels," AEcR 121 (1949):18. Augustine was the first to regard them as sons of Seth.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christos, p. 93.

<sup>5</sup>Cooke, p. 216.

<sup>6</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology, p. 112.

<sup>7</sup>The divine sonship of Israel and Israelites is presented in

with an earthly father in other passages (e.g., Deut. 1:31; 8:5; Ps. 103:13). In several others Israel is called His son (e.g., Hos. 11:1) or His firstborn (Exod. 4:22). God's authority and tenderness are highlighted in most of these passages. The election of Israel as God's firstborn was revealed in the historical exodus from Egypt (Exod. 4:22; Isa. 63:16; Jer. 3:19; Hos. 11:1; cf. the "adoption" in Rom. 9:4). The subsequent prophets stressed the seriousness of this relationship, with its demand of obedience and loyalty. They lamented the fact that Israel constantly repaid God's fatherly love with ingratitude and disobedience (cf. Deut. 32:5-6; Jer. 3:4-20). Israel cried out, "Lord, you are our Father" (cf. Isa. 63:15-16; 64:8-9), and God answered with an offer of forgiveness based on repentance (cf. Jer. 3:22; 31:9, 20; Hos. 11:1-11).<sup>1</sup>

God is compared with a father in His pity (Ps. 103:13) and in His reproof (Prov. 3:12). He is called Israel's creator, founder, and master (cf. Exod. 4:22; Deut. 32:6, 18). Hosea 11:1 pictures God as having called Israel out of Egypt as His son, trained him as a good father should, and blessed him with care and love. But Isaiah notes that God had brought up children who had rebelled against Him, rather than loved Him as their Father (Isa. 1:2; 30:1, 9). Children should be

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Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 32:6, 18-19; Pss. 68:5; 73:15; 82:6; 103:13-14; Prov. 3:12; Isa. 1:2; 30:1, 9; 43:6-7; 45:11; 63:8, 16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4, 19, 22; 4:22; 31:9; 31:20; Hos. 1:10; 11:1; 13:13; Mal. 1:6; 2:10; 3:17. Cf. Erminie Huntress, "'Son of God' in Jewish Writings Prior to the Christian Era," *JBL* 54 (1935):118-19; McKenzie, "men," pp. 326-32. Franz Delitzsch says that Ps. 80:16 also refers to Israel as God's son, though the Targum renders the term as "King Messiah" (Biblical Commentary on the Psalms, K & D, 3 vols., 2:388).

<sup>1</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Prayers of Jesus, pp. 12-15.

loyal to their father, but Israel turned away from God (Jer. 3:19).<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah 31:9 emphasizes God's fatherly love and care for exiles returning home. His authority as father is stressed in Isaiah 45:9-11; 64:7. His power to help His children is shown in Isaiah 63:16. Finally, Malachi shows that Israel's priests have a responsibility as God's sons to honor and fear Him (1:6) and that Israel is to love one another as brothers (2:10).<sup>2</sup>

In prophetic accusations, the people of Israel are called "sons in whom is no faithfulness" (Deut. 32:20), "sons who deal corruptly" (Isa. 1:4), "rebellious sons" (30:1), "lying sons" (30:9), "faithless sons" (Jer. 3:14, 22), and "stupid sons" (4:22). Ephraim is called an "unwise son" (Hos. 13:13). These expressions emphasize two facts about the relationship of Israel to God: (1) the people of Israel are subject to God, and (2) God loves His people.<sup>3</sup>

Several times God calls Israel His "firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9).<sup>4</sup> The term "firstborn" in the Old Testament refers to the favored and honored place of the firstborn son in the family. But the one born first did not always become (or remain) the firstborn (cf. Gen. 48:13-20; 1 Kings 1:5-53; 1 Chron. 5:1-2). Among the nations of the ancient Near East, Israel arrived much later than most, but God raised

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<sup>1</sup>TDOT, s.v. "בן," by Helmer Ringgren, 1 (1974):17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18. Ringgren concludes that the idea of God as Israel's father was not central in the faith of Israel. He claims that the figures of father and son were created ad hoc.

<sup>3</sup>Haag, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 1:199-200.

Israel up to the place of the most favored, saying "Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Exod. 4:22).<sup>1</sup>

The plural term "the sons of God" is used of Israelites generally (cf. Deut. 32:19; Isa. 1:2) and more particularly simply of godly Israelites (cf. Deut. 14:1; Hos. 1:10).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand the "sons of the Most High" in Psalm 82:6 may be unjust human judges. They are "sons" because they share the authority of God and in His name provide justice to men.<sup>3</sup> They are also called "gods," indicating that they represent God in the theocracy, judging in His name and authority. The people go to them for judgment as though going to God (cf. Deut. 17:9) or His sons.<sup>4</sup>

The excellence of a son in the Old Testament consists in obedience to his father.<sup>5</sup> Thus at the calling of Israel by God to be His son, the promise of obedience was made (Exod. 24:7; cf. 4:23). God became Father of Israel as a nation, and Father of those who accepted the obedience of sons (cf. Deut. 32:6; Ps. 103:13; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Mal. 3:17).

A key aspect of Israel's divine sonship is God's election. God is father to Israel because of His gracious and faithful nature. The father-son concept expresses Israel's special elective, covenantal

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<sup>1</sup>Bess, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Williams, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup>McKenzie, "Men," p. 337.

<sup>4</sup>H. P. Liddon, The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Richardson, p. 148.

relationship to God.<sup>1</sup> Israel became God's son by the choice of God through the Exodus. For Israel it involved a response of love and obedience.<sup>2</sup> God had a legal claim as Father and provided care and love for Israel as His firstborn son.<sup>3</sup>

In the Old Testament this divine sonship is peculiar to Israel. All men are God's subjects, but not all are God's sons. Israel therefore was not God's son because of creation (cf. Gen. 1:27; 5:1, 3), but rather because God made the nation for Himself (cf. Deut. 32:6).<sup>4</sup> God gave Israel being and sonship at the same time. In return, Israel owed to God love, trust, faithfulness, obedience, holiness, and repentance.<sup>5</sup>

Because God chose Israel, the nation is God's son and His beloved (cf. Deut. 14:1-2; 2 Sam. 7:14-15; Ps. 89:19-28; Isa. 43:1-13; Jer. 31:1-22; Hos. 11:1). The son is chosen for service. As Lewis Hay remarks, "To be God's son means to be both the object and the agent of the divine purpose."<sup>6</sup> The chosen son is obedient to God as his Father.

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<sup>1</sup>Cooke, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup>Fuller, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>NIDNIT, s.v. "Son of God," by Otto Michel, 3 (1978):636.

<sup>4</sup>John L. McKenzie, "The Divine Sonship of Israel and the Covenant," CBO 8 (1946):320. McKenzie says that God is even more a father to Israel than Abraham is (Isa. 63:16). The divine sonship of Israel must be understood in the light of God's covenant. He formed Israel to be His people. Thus Israel came into existence by the free act of God (pp. 321-30).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>6</sup>Hay, p. 109. Oscar Cullmann states that when Israel is called the son of God, it means that God has chosen this people for a special mission and that His people owe Him absolute obedience (The Christology of the New Testament, p. 273). Walter Kasper notes that in the Old

In some sense, true sonship depends on the son's continuance in obedience to the Father's will. Indeed the history of Israel is primarily an evaluation of the nation's obedience or disobedience as God's son (cf. Deut. 1:1--4:40; Acts 7:35-53). The focus of the term "son of God" is thus often narrowed from Israel as a whole to the righteous or obedient remnant of the nation.<sup>1</sup> Whether this use of the term could have played a part in the New Testament title will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

#### Davidic King

The Davidic monarchy received its central themes of covenant and sonship particularly from God's special father-son relationship to Israel as a nation.<sup>2</sup> But not even the king or Messiah ever received the solemn title "the son of God" in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup>

The royal messianic hopes of Israel were based on Nathan's prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:12-16, in which to some degree the original agreement between the people and their king was replaced by a divine covenant between God and the Davidic dynasty.<sup>4</sup> The coronation ritual,

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Testament, divine sonship is the result of God's free, gracious choice (election), not of physical descent (Jesus the Christ, p. 164). The person who is chosen as son of God receives a special mission, requiring his obedience and service. The Old Testament title is thus understood functionally and personally, not as nature or substance.

<sup>1</sup>Hay, p. 109; cf. B. M. F. van Iersel, "Der Sohn" in den synoptischen Jesusworten, pp. 104-10.

<sup>2</sup>Cooke, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup>Bousset, p. 93. The closest it gets is Ps. 2:12: "kiss the son," but the text may be corrupt. Bousset says that the apocryphal and New Testament uses of the title are alien to the Old Testament (p. 94).

<sup>4</sup>Michel, p. 636.

perhaps reflected in Psalm 2, was based on 2 Samuel 7 (cf. 23:5). A psalmist later intercedes for the king on the basis of his divine legitimation and calls him God's firstborn son (Ps. 89:3-4, 26-27). The king is thus seen as God's representative on earth.<sup>1</sup>

The title "son" of God is applied to the Davidic king in 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Psalms 2:7; 89:26-27.<sup>2</sup> Each time it is based on the Davidic Covenant, in which God said of David's descendant, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son" (2 Sam. 7:14). In most of these passages, Solomon is called the son of God, not because he is the king, but because of the special affection God holds for him because of his father David. In contrast to David, the divinely appointed king (cf. Ps. 2:7), Solomon's principal claim to affection is that he is the son of David. God accepts him as son because he is the son of David.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the king of Israel was God's son in the light of his election by (and obedience to) God.<sup>4</sup> He was God's son by the "decree" of God (Ps. 2:7). But obedience was necessary as well, for he could claim a divine right to rule only as he remained God's obedient servant.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 637. The king therefore was to play a major role in the outworking of God's covenant (cf. Commission Biblique Pontificale, Bible et Christologie, pp. 76-77).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dunn, p. 15; Taylor, p. 52. Vosté (p. 20) says that judges or kings are even called "gods" (Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9; Pss. 45:6; 58:1; 82:6).

<sup>3</sup>McKenzie, "Men," pp. 335-36.

<sup>4</sup>Cullmann, p. 273.

<sup>5</sup>Hay, p. 109.



Divine descent was never attributed to either the people or their kings in Israel. Gustaf Dalman says that an Israelite would always have taken the title "son of God" in a figurative sense, even when messianic.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the king of Israel ever considered a god (cf. 2 Kings 5:7; Ezek. 28:2, 9).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the application of the son of God title to Davidic kings does not reflect the Egyptian idea of the physical generation of the king by a god, though it may be similar to the Babylonian view in which the king was simply given a lofty status.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of Egypt, the divine sonship of ancient Near Eastern kings usually did not involve the divinization of the kings.<sup>4</sup> In Assyrian royal mythology, for example, the king was adopted as the son of God.<sup>5</sup>

The Israelite king became the representative of God's kingly rule on earth, with the responsibility of obedience to His laws.<sup>6</sup> Cooke

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<sup>1</sup>Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, p. 272. On the use of the term "messianic", cf. Gerhard Voss, Die Christologie der lukanischen Schriften in Grundzügen, pp. 81-83.

<sup>2</sup>De Vaux, pp. 112-13. He notes, "Israel never had, never could have had, any idea of a king who was a god."

<sup>3</sup>Marshall, p. 112. The relationship in the Old Testament was divine care and protection, answered by human service and obedience.

<sup>4</sup>Cooke, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology, p. 31. Dalman, pp. 272-73, notes that Assurbanipal in his Annals called himself "an offspring of Asshur and Bilit," by which he meant that he was destined from birth to have royal power. In Egypt, however, the kings were seen as the real descendants of the gods. According to Dahood, the same was true in Canaanite culture (Mitchell Dahood, Psalms I, pp. 11-12); cf. D. Wayne Montgomery, "Concepts of Divine Sonship in the Ancient Near East: The Mešiah Yahweh as God's Son" (Th.D. dissertation, Iliff School of Theology, 1968), pp. 8-55.

<sup>6</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 31.

agrees that the Egyptian tradition of the physical begetting of Pharaoh by a god is absent in the Old Testament,<sup>1</sup> but with Haag he says that the Israelites transformed the Egyptian physical divine begetting (rooted in myth) into the idea of a divine sonship based on election and covenant.<sup>2</sup>

However, there is no valid reason to doubt that the origin of the king's sonship in Israel lies with the revelation of God's program for Israel through the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 7). William Manson says that the motive which led to the use of the title with reference to the kings was not grounded in mythology but in the belief of the prophets in Israel's election by God and in His divine purpose for the nation and its institutions.<sup>3</sup> When the Davidic monarchy ceased to exist politically, the prophetic hopes focused on the expectation of a Messiah or anointed prince who would fulfill the promises in the future. The "son of God" concept was thus always a messianic potential (as seen in the subsequent use of Pss. 2:7; 89:27 in Judaism).

It is certainly clear that no Old Testament prophet ever attacked the kings for claiming divinity. The inference can be drawn that the kings never claimed divinity, and thus that 2 Samuel 7 and Psalms 2 and 89 refer to divine adoption or legitimation rather than to any type of natural or metaphysical divinization. There is an obvious parallel between the nation and the king in their relation to God: (1) God chose Israel, made a covenant with the nation, and called it His

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<sup>1</sup>Cooke, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Haag, p. 157. He points out that in 2 Sam. 7 and Pss. 2 and 89, there is no mention of a wife. The event involves only God and the king.

<sup>3</sup>William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 146.

firstborn son; (2) God chose David and his house, made a covenant with them, and called the Davidic king His firstborn son.<sup>1</sup>

Again it is not clear whether in Israel the king's relationship to God was seen more in terms of adoption<sup>2</sup> or divine legitimation of the ruler.<sup>3</sup> The only way a king in Israel could become the "son of God" and be given God's earthly authority was for God officially to declare him to be His son. Haag says that it is not correct to call this concept an adoption of the king by God, since "the institution of adoption was not known in Israel."<sup>4</sup> This may be related to the "announcements" of Jesus' sonship in the New Testament (cf. Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 1:32-35; Rom. 1:4).

### Messiah

The use of 2 Samuel 7 and Psalms 2 and 89 as messianic testimonies shows that to be God's Son was recognized in later Judaism as one of the Messiah's characteristics.<sup>5</sup> The extent to which this interpretation was valid will now be analyzed.

#### 2 Samuel 7

The source of Israel's hope for the Davidic Messiah in the Old

<sup>1</sup>Cooke, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>Ringgren, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Hengel, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Haag, p. 155. Dunn concurs that when the Old Testament speaks of a king as son of God, it denotes legal legitimation rather than adoption (p. 18). Physical sonship is deliberately excluded, and there is no suggestion of an individual man being somehow divinized.

<sup>5</sup>Moule, p. 28; Voss, pp. 85-87.

Testament and in postbiblical Judaism was 2 Samuel 7:12-14. The promise to David through Nathan ("I will raise up your seed [LXX, σπέρμα] and he shall be my son [LXX, υἱός]) is echoed also in Romans 1:3-4, where Paul refers to Jesus as the seed of David and the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> The key words of 2 Samuel 7 show up in a number of important later passages dealing with the Son of David (e.g., Isa. 55; Pss. 2; 89; cf. Psalms of Solomon 17; 18; Sirach 47; 4Q Flor. 10, 18).<sup>2</sup>

Here the promise of everlasting royal power for the house of David is closely connected with the idea of divine sonship.<sup>3</sup> The anointed king of the future, as son of David, would be son of God--that is, God's chosen and beloved servant.<sup>4</sup> De Vaux says that the passage speaks of the adoption of the entire Davidic dynasty, which then had to be made effective for each king (cf. 1 Chron. 22:10; 28:6).<sup>5</sup>

Verse 14 can be strictly translated as follows: "I shall be to him for a father, and he shall be to me for [as] a son." The Davidic kings' sonship is thus metaphorical or adoptional (cf. the figurative

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<sup>1</sup>Seyoon Kim, The Origin of Paul's Gospel, p. 109; Christoph Burger, Jesus als Davidsson, FRLANT, pp. 25-35.

<sup>2</sup>Eduard Schweizer, "The Concept of the Davidic 'Son of God' in Acts and Its Old Testament Background," in Studies in Luke-Acts, p. 187; Burger, pp. 16, 23.

<sup>3</sup>Evald Lövestam, Son and Saviour: A Study of Acts 13, 32-37, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Otto Pfliegerer, The Early Christian Conception of Christ, p. 21. Cf. Williams who says that the sonship of David's son was half moral and half official (p. 313).

<sup>5</sup>De Vaux, pp. 112-13; cf. Montgomery, pp. 190-216. Haag says that the father-son language of 2 Sam. 7:14 was originally a prototype for Yahweh's judging and saving activity toward the Davidic dynasty. Later writers turned it into a covenant formula (cf. 2 Sam. 23:5; 2 Chron. 13:5; 21:7; Ps. 89:3, 28, 34, 39; Jer. 33:21; see Haag, p. 156).

expression in Exod. 4:16, where Moses is to be "as God to" Aaron), not natural or metaphysical.<sup>1</sup> The "seed" is to come forth from David's body (2 Sam. 7:12). David's own humanity is also mentioned in verse 12. The king who is to become God's "son" is simply a human being. He will become God's son by being in the line of David--an heir to the promise given to David concerning his seed.<sup>2</sup>

But such a promise has definite messianic implications. The promise of 2 Samuel 7:14 is recorded three times in 1 Chronicles (17:11-14; 22:9-10; 28:6). In 2 Chronicles 6:42, Solomon calls himself God's anointed (LXX, χριστός). Thus Solomon is both called "messiah" (anointed) and given the promise that he will be God's son. The promise would logically apply to any of his faithful descendants as well.<sup>3</sup>

In the Qumran literature, 2 Samuel 7:10-14 is summarized and applied to the Messiah.<sup>4</sup> The influence of the Davidic Covenant on the early church is seen in Luke 1:32-33; Acts 13:33-34; Hebrews 1:5-8.<sup>5</sup> As already noted, the confession in Romans 1:3-4 is based on the interpretation of 2 Samuel 7 in terms of (the risen) Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Cooke, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Huntress, p. 120. Huntress says that the books of Chronicles were probably popular reading in the synagogues of the intertestamental period, so that these passages would fuel "messianic Son of God" speculations.

<sup>4</sup>Q Florilegium 10-14; cf. Fuller, Foundations, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Hengel, p. 64; Lövestam, pp. 13-14. For references in the early church fathers, cf. Burger, pp. 35-41.

Psalm 2

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm, ascribed to David in Acts 4:25.<sup>1</sup> Kraus and Craigie, among others, call it a coronation psalm, in which the crown was set on the new king's head and he was anointed and proclaimed king (cf. 2 Kings 11:12).<sup>2</sup> Kidner, however, says that Psalm 2 probably recalls David's coronation during a subsequent time of trouble (such as pictured in 2 Sam. 10), since when David acceded to the throne, there were no subject peoples in rebellion (cf. Ps. 2:1-3).<sup>3</sup> David likely composed the psalm at a time during his reign when it was necessary to recall God's promise to him.

For the Davidic kings, power and authority were received from God and exercised under His direction. The ideal world was one in which all earthly rulers would recognize God's rule and His appointed earthly (Davidic) king. The Davidic king is here called God's "anointed" (LXX, *χριστός*). The king's anointing symbolized his being set aside from others to perform a particular service (cf. 1 Kings 1:45). Psalm 2:2 shows that the anointing had already taken place, and verse 6 notes that he was already officially king.<sup>4</sup> Verse 6 also shows that God had installed or established His king in Zion (Jerusalem), so that both

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<sup>1</sup>On the use of the royal psalms in the New Testament, see Samuel E. Balentine, "The Royal Psalms and the New Testament: From 'messiah' to 'Messiah,'" Theological Educator 29 (1984):56-62.

<sup>2</sup>Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalmen, BKAT, 2 vols., 1:14; Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, WBC, pp. 64-65.

<sup>3</sup>Derek Kidner, Psalms 1-72, TOTC, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup>Craigie, p. 66.

Jerusalem and David were authenticated by God's promise through Nathan.<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that the psalm is based on the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7.<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 2:7 ("I will tell of the decree of Yahweh: He said to me, 'You are my son, today I have begotten you.'") is a proclamation of the king's position as the son of God.<sup>3</sup> The "decree" was perhaps a personal covenant document (based on 2 Sam. 7)<sup>4</sup> given to a king at his coronation (cf. 2 Kings 11:12), which renewed God's covenant promise to the Davidic dynasty, though in David's case the reference is specifically to God's promise in 2 Samuel 7:14. The decree established the authority of the king. The concept of sonship was at the heart of the covenant. It was based on the relationship between God and Israel (cf. Deut. 1:31; 8:5).<sup>5</sup>

By Psalm 2:7, the anointing of the king is already an accomplished fact (v. 6), and the king refers to a decree already given (v. 7).<sup>6</sup> The word "today" indicates that from the day of the making of

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<sup>1</sup>Kidner, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Lövestam, p. 15. Heb. 1:5 shows that Ps. 2:7 was connected closely with 2 Sam. 7:14 in the early church.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Kraus and Steichele call it a fixed royal protocol document (Hans-Joachim Kraus, Theologie der Psalmen, BKAT, p. 35; Hans-Jörg Steichele, Der leidende Sohn Gottes, pp. 137-41).

<sup>5</sup>Craigie, p. 67. Artur Weiser claims that the "decree" is probably the legitimation by prophets and priests of the "royal protocol" known from Egyptian royal ritual (The Psalms, OIL, p. 113). The psalmist transforms the pagan idea of the deification of the king into the adoption or declaration of the sonship of the king at his enthronement, and excludes the idea of physical begetting by adding the word "today."

<sup>6</sup>Cooke, p. 205.

the covenant (and later, from the day of the new king's accession to the throne) the king would be favored by God as if he were God's child.

"You are my son" is either an adoption or legitimation formula<sup>1</sup> and has metaphorical significance.<sup>2</sup> The word "today," in fact, rules out interpreting the verse as referring to a physical or metaphysical sonship.<sup>3</sup>

According to Fohrer, this concept of sonship has its source in the acknowledgment of a child of a concubine either by the father or the childless wife. The statement, "this day I have begotten you," does not fit an adoption formula. The king was acknowledged as son by a declaration of God and as such could have a share in the authority,

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<sup>1</sup>The adoption view is held by Ringgren, p. 18; De Vaux, p. 112; Goppelt, p. 200; Cole, p. 480; and Eichrodt (Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols., 1 [1961]:125, 477), among others. Kraus notes that the type of mythological-physical divine sonship of kings practiced in Egypt was totally absent in Israel. The king in Jerusalem became God's "son" through divine appointment and a public installation, which Kraus calls an "Adoptionsvorgang" by means of a prophetically declared "Rechtsakt." He thinks that the chosen king was by adoption considered to be drawn to the side of God (Kraus, Theologie, p. 142).

<sup>2</sup>Bezançon calls it a royal title (Jean-Noel Bezançon, Le Christ de Dieu, p. 38).

<sup>3</sup>Cooke, pp. 209-10. He says that the Egyptian ideology of the divine king was transformed in Israel by the ordinary formula of adoption, indicating divine election to an intimate relationship to God. Similar formulas, he notes, can be found in Hammurabi's law. No change of the king's nature is implied. "It celebrates his acceptance as God's son, i.e., God's chosen agent who will stand in peculiarly close relationship to God as his viceregent for the chosen people" (p. 211). Richardson claims that Ps. 2:7 is a Hebrew adaptation of a Babylonian hymn for the enthronement of the king (p. 148). The hymn, he says, re-enacts the Primal Man who was the first ruler of the world (cf. Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8). In the Hebrew version, the king is king by adoption and not by procreation. The obedience of the king to the divine law was the criterion by which his kingship was to be measured.



possessions, and inheritance of God.<sup>1</sup>

Bess is probably correct when he concludes that the verb "begotten" in Psalm 2:7 should be taken as Hiphil (causative and declarative). He translates, "Thou art my Son; this day have I declared thy sonship." First, he argues that the statement contains synonymous parallelism. The clause, "Thou art my Son," is paralleled by the clause, "this day have I declared thy sonship," thus repeating the same idea. Second, the phrase "this day" refers to the day of the declaration of the decree which announces the coronation of the king (cf. v. 6). The begetting is not a literal begetting by a pagan god, but rather a proclamation by Yahweh that the new king is His "son" in accordance with the promise to David (2 Sam. 7:14). Third, the New Testament may quote this verse as a prediction of the resurrection (Acts 13:33-34),<sup>2</sup> since it is the resurrection which declares to the world

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<sup>1</sup>Fohrer, p. 351. The description of the king as God's son has roots in Israel's designation as God's son. Israel's sonship serves as a model for the relation between God and the Davidic dynasty. Haag, p. 156, says that the word "today" refers to the enthronement ceremony (cf. v. 6). The statement, "You are my son, today I have begotten you," was common in legal terminology, referring to the recognition of a child born to a slave (as the wife's representative), not to the adoption of a foreign child. There are no extant examples of this formula, Haag admits, but he claims that the practice was well known (cf. Gen. 30:1-3 and the laws of Hammurabi). Hengel, however, says that "the juridical concepts of adoption and legitimation are hardly adequate to describe this happening appropriately. It is certainly no coincidence that Psalms 2 and 110 become the most important pillars of the early church's christological argument from scripture" (p. 23).

<sup>2</sup>The precise application of Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33 is much debated. (1) Some commentators understand the verb "raised up" as referring to God's bringing the Messiah (sending the Son) into Israel's history (cf. F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of the Acts, NICNT, p. 275; Everett F. Harrison, Acts: The Expanding Church, p. 213; Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 9:426-28). Those who hold this view usually emphasize correspondences to Acts 3:22, 26; 5:20; 7:37; 13:23. (2) Others take "raised up" as

that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. Rom. 1:3-4). Fourth, Psalm 2:8 refers to the inheritance rights of the son. The Son of God who is declared Son by His resurrection is thus pronounced the heir to the nations of the earth.<sup>1</sup> In this view the verb "begotten" of Psalm 2:7 does not refer to generation or birth (or even adoption), but rather to the declaration of a covenant relationship with God (similar to divine legitimation).<sup>2</sup>

The second reference in Psalm 2 to the king's sonship is in verse 12: "kiss the son." Kidner is among a large number of scholars who believe that the statement should be translated differently; he offers "kiss sincerely" or "pay true homage."<sup>3</sup> Either way, the object of the homage is the "son" or king of verse 7. Craigie and some others argue that the use of Aramaic ܐܘܢ for "son" in verse 12 is probably

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referring to Jesus' exaltation (cf. Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 390). Toussaint suggests that the verb "raise up" is used elsewhere in Acts with the sense of elevation and that when resurrection is mentioned in 13:34 it is explained as being "from the dead." (3) A majority of commentators appear to understand "raised up" as referring to the resurrection of Jesus (cf. Dale Goldsmith, "Acts 13:33-37: A Peshar on II Samuel 7," JBL 87 [1968]:322; Ernst Haenchen, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 411, n. 3; Evald Lövestam, Son and Saviour, pp. 8-11, 40-48; I. Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles, TNIC, p. 226; Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles, p. 258), since the context clearly emphasizes Jesus' resurrection and Romans 1:3-4 provides a similar kerygmatic connection between Christ's sonship and resurrection.

<sup>1</sup>Bess, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Spurgeon called the controversy over the eternal sonship of Christ as supported by Ps. 2:7 "one of the most unprofitable which ever engaged the pens of theologians," and he refused to comment on the verse (The Treasury of David, 2 vols., 1:17).

<sup>3</sup>Kidner, p. 53. The Revised Standard Version has the translation, "kiss his feet."

original, for a number of reasons. Aramaic was used widely in Syria and Palestine from at least the ninth century B.C. The words are addressed by God to His own king. The command to "kiss the son" thus relates to the homage which the earthly rulers should pay to the king (God's son) mentioned in verse 7. Kissing was a sign of homage and submission (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kings 19:18). In verses 10-12, therefore, the earthly rulers, who are in rebellion against God and His "anointed" (v. 2), are commanded to serve God and to acknowledge His king.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Psalm 2 offers God's "son" the whole earth shows that "this is no ordinary son of David."<sup>2</sup> In postbiblical Judaism, therefore, Psalm 2 was used in messianic-eschatological descriptions, although it did not play a prominent role.<sup>3</sup> It is used messianically in the Psalms of Solomon 17:26; 18:18; and the Midrash on Psalm 2. The Targum on Psalm 80:16 reads "King Messiah" in place of "son," apparently relying on Psalm 2:7. In 1 Enoch 48:10; 52:4 the references to "His anointed" (Messiah) may come from Psalm 2:2 (cf. 1 Enoch 46:5).<sup>4</sup>

In Qumran, 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2 are applied to the Davidic

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<sup>1</sup>Craigie, p. 64; Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, pp. 791-92.

<sup>2</sup>Kidner, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Lövestam, pp. 17-23. T. W. Manson ("The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus," BJRL 34 [1952]:324) notes that the Targum on Ps. 2:7 paraphrases the verse, "Beloved as a son to his father art thou to me" (cf. Mark 1:11, the voice from heaven). The Midrash on Psalms illustrates the verse from Exod. 4:22; Ps. 110:1; Isa. 42:1; 52:13. Manson says that the interpretation of Ps. 2 as a prophecy of the Davidic Messiah is the oldest and most widespread of all in Jewish circles.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. also bSukk. 52a; bBer. 10a, 44. Dalman says that "Ps. 2 was not of decisive importance in the Jewish conception of the Messiah" (p. 272), though this is somewhat questionable.

Messiah in a Florilegium in 4Q. Psalm 2:7 is also found in a collection in 3Q2.<sup>1</sup> The theme of an effectual royal decree with regard to David's promised heir is found in Qumran and in Sirach 47:11.<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament, Psalm 2 is used messianically in Acts 4:24-27; 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; Revelation 12:5; 19:15; and probably in the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism and Transfiguration (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35).<sup>3</sup> Van Iersel further suggests that the  $\pi\alpha\upsilon\varsigma$   $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  title in Acts 3 and 4 is there synonymous with  $\upsilon\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$   $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , especially considering the context and since in Acts 4:25 David is also called  $\pi\alpha\upsilon\varsigma$ .<sup>4</sup> God's decrees concerning Christ are mentioned in Acts 2:23; 4:25; 10:42; 17:31; and Romans 1:4, where the subject of the decree is Christ as the Son of God. These passages may show that the decree of Psalm 2:7 was taken by the early church to be both prospective and retrospective—to include the preexistence, incarnation, ministry, passion, resurrection, ascension, and parousia of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Matthew Black concludes that the Davidic Old Testament testimonia (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; Amos 9:11) had an important influence

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Black, "The Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *NIS* 18 (1971):2-3. He claims that it is now certain that a major source of the Son title lies in this Davidic strand of Jewish messianic tradition.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.3.

<sup>3</sup>According to Kraus, two themes are set forth by these quotations: (1) the Sonship of Jesus (from Ps. 2:7) and (2) the rebellion (and overcoming) of the enemies of God (from Ps. 2:1-2, 8-9) (Kraus, *Theologie*, p. 227).

<sup>4</sup>Van Iersel, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup>Many commentators, however, relate the New Testament application of Psalm 2:7 only to Jesus' baptism, Transfiguration, resurrection, and exaltation (cf. Kraus, *Theologie*, p. 228).

on the development of the Son of God Christology in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

Fuller says that "it is difficult to suppose that the Palestinian church could have adopted 'Son of God' as a christological title from any other source than from Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14."<sup>2</sup> But, though the title may find its biblical basis here,<sup>3</sup> it is doubtful that the messianic interpretation of Psalm 2:7 could be responsible for the significant position that the "Son of God" title claimed in the early church.<sup>4</sup>

#### Psalm 89

Psalm 89 is an expansion of the basic promise in 2 Samuel 7.

The word בן ("son") is not used of the king, but the king addresses God

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<sup>1</sup>Black, p. 4. Kidner states, "The New Testament, revealing God's only-begotten Son as co-eternal with the Father, refers the 'today' of Psalm 2:7 to the incarnate Son's resurrection, when, like a king at his crowning, He was 'designated Son of God in power' (Rom. 1:4; cf. Acts 13:33)" (p. 20). Fuller, however, argues that since nothing is said in Ps. 2 about the Son's endowment with God's Spirit, the son of Ps. 2:7 is not the Son of Mark 1:11 (Mission, p. 87). The son of Ps. 2 is described as one who will break his enemies with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces, rather than the Servant whom God sent to preach good tidings to the poor (Luke 4:18).

<sup>2</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 167. He says, however, that there is no surviving evidence for the use of Ps. 2:7 in earliest Palestinian Christianity. According to Casey, "The notion of sonship as appointment would derive naturally from Ps. ii but not the expression 'Son of God' as a title" (R. P. Casey, "The Earliest Christologies," JThS 9 (1958):267. See Van Iersel, pp. 66-77, 185-91, for further discussion of the influence of Ps. 2:7 on the New Testament.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie," in Neues Testament und Geschichte, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>Hay, p. 107. According to Fitzmyer, "To cite Psalm 2 as if it were clear evidence in pre-Christian Judaism of a belief in a 'messianic' figure (= a future, ideal anointed David) with the title 'son of God' is to go beyond the evidence of the psalm (or other related OT passages)" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, A Wandering Aramean, p. 105).

as his "Father" (v. 26) and God appoints the king the "firstborn" (v. 27), the "highest of the kings of the earth." Verse 28 states firmly that the divine sonship of the king is based in the Davidic Covenant (cf. vv. 3, 34, 39).<sup>1</sup>

The term "firstborn" shows the king's unique position of precedence and power. As the firstborn son, the king is the heir of the Father (cf. Heb. 1:2).<sup>2</sup> Thus the power and authority of kingship is joined to divine sonship.<sup>3</sup> The promise in verse 27 that David and his sons will be "highest" above the kings of the earth may be based on Deuteronomy 28:1, where Israel is to be high above all the nations of the earth, since Israel's national glory would be realized in its king.<sup>4</sup> Any idea of a physical descent of the king from God is negated by the emphasis on his humanity in verse 19: "I have exalted one chosen from the people."<sup>5</sup> He is exalted as the firstborn—a claim to unique privilege.

In both Psalms 2 and 89, the psalmists call on God as a father

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<sup>1</sup>Haag, p. 156. The king of Israel is here given the title ("highest"), which refers to a man only here in the entire Old Testament. Haag also says that calling the Israelite king "firstborn" may imply that the other kings of the earth are also in some sense "sons" of God.

<sup>2</sup>The king should therefore remember that he may call on God with the words, "You are my Father," based on the Father-son relationship of 2 Samuel 7:14 (Kraus, *Theologie*, p. 35).

<sup>3</sup>Lövestam, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Delitzsch, 3:40.

<sup>5</sup>Fohrer, p. 350. He adds that the new Israelite king could begin his rule when Yahweh had acknowledged the new king as His son, established his royal name (2 Sam. 7:9), granted him a first request (Pss. 2:8; 20:5), and given him his crown (2 Kings 11:12) and scepter (Ps. 110:2). See also Cooke, p. 211.

when the authority of the king is being threatened. They consider the sonship of the king to be a divine guarantee of his authority and power.<sup>1</sup> Thus in Psalm 89 the king's legitimation by God is used as the basis of a request to Him for help.<sup>2</sup> Since David is called the "anointed" one in verse 20, there is an implicit expectation that a future Son of God will in reality be supreme over all earthly kings.<sup>3</sup>

#### Psalm 110

This psalm is attributed to David both in its opening title and in the New Testament (by Jesus Himself, Mark 12:36-37; cf. also Acts 2:33-35). It may be an enthronement oracle, addressed by David to his superior.<sup>4</sup> David salutes his sovereign, who is at God's right hand. Kidner says that when this is compared to 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalms 2:7; 89:26-27, it is obvious that the greater king of Psalm 110:1-3 is the ultimate, ideal Son of God (cf. Heb. 1:13).<sup>5</sup> If David is the author, then David's "lord" is someone "between" himself and Yahweh (the LORD), namely, the Messiah. Verse 1 is cited eighteen times in the New Testament, and each time it refers to Jesus and is used to show that He is the Messiah (cf. Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42-43; 22:69; Acts 2:34-35; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col.

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<sup>1</sup>Ringgren, pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Fohrer, p. 350.

<sup>3</sup>Aubrey R. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel, p. 28. Spurgeon says that nowhere in the Old Testament is it written that the patriarchs or prophets called God their Father, and thus Ps. 89:26 refers specifically to Christ (2:47); cf. Jesus' use of "Abba."

<sup>4</sup>Derek Kidner, Psalms 73-150, TOTC, p. 392.

<sup>5</sup>Kidner, Psalms 1-72, p. 20.

3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:2).<sup>1</sup> The question about David's son in Matthew 22:42-44 (and parallels) presupposes a messianic interpretation of Psalm 110 which was accepted to some extent by the Pharisees.<sup>2</sup>

In verse 2, God has the scepter, but the king is urged to rule. Then in verse 3, the king (or Messiah) is pictured as going forth in holiness and glory at the head of a host of followers.<sup>3</sup> The text of verse 3b is difficult or corrupt, but it may indicate that the king is "begotten" or "brought forth" by God.<sup>4</sup> Hengel says that the verse probably originally read, "On the holy mountain from your mother's womb, from the dawn of the morning I bore you."<sup>5</sup> The Septuagint reads, "I have begotten you [the king] from the womb before the morning." If this reading is correct (most English translations do not accept it), then it is a pronouncement along the lines of Psalm 2:7 that the ultimate

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<sup>1</sup>This list includes allusions as well as full citations. See also the New Testament use of Psalm 110:4 (John 12:34; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 21). On the use of Psalm 110 in the New Testament, cf. Philipp Vielhauer, Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament, pp. 167-75; W. R. G. Loader, "Christ at the Right Hand--Ps. cx. 1 in the New Testament," NIS 24 (1978):199-217. According to Loader, there is no "firm evidence" that Psalm 110 was "applied to the kingly Messiah by Judaism before its use in Christianity" (p. 199).

<sup>2</sup>James R. Edwards, "The Son of God: Its Antecedents in Judaism and Hellenism and Its Use in the Earliest Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 20. For a fuller discussion of the interpretation of Psalm 110, see David M. Hay, Glory at the Right Hand, SBLMS.

<sup>3</sup>Kidner, Psalms 73-150, pp. 394-95.

<sup>4</sup>Cooke, p. 223; cf. Kraus, Theologie, p. 144. Johnson says that Ps. 110:1-4 deals with the rebirth of the Messiah, which takes place at his deliverance from the Underworld, when he is elevated forever both to the throne of David and to the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek (p. 131).

<sup>5</sup>Hengel, p. 23.



Davidic King is God's Son (a similar pronouncement is given in 110:4 that He is an eternal priest).

Daniel 3:25; 7:13

Since Hippolytus, many theologians have interpreted the "one like a son of God" in Daniel 3:25 as a Christophany--as equivalent to "the angel of Yahweh" elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Partly because of this, later rabbis opposed calling angels "sons of God." Others, noting the reference to God's "angel" in 3:28 and the fact that both statements came from the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar, have concluded that the term alludes to the Babylonian belief in innumerable demonic spirits, physically generated from the gods.<sup>2</sup> There is certainly nothing in the passage that demands a Christological interpretation.

In the New Testament, the title "Son of Man," based on Daniel 7:13, is never specifically equated with "Son of God." But F. F. Bruce contends that when viewed in the light of ancient Near Eastern imagery, the "one like a son of man" would be seen to be greeted by the Ancient of Days as His firstborn Son. Parallels can be found in Psalms 80:17; 89:19-21; 110:1, where God acclaims and installs the "man of his right hand" as His Son, His firstborn.<sup>3</sup> It is certainly noteworthy that when Jesus was asked by the High Priest whether He was the Son of God, He responded by paraphrasing a combination of Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1 (Matt. 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 22; Cole, p. 480.

<sup>2</sup>McKenzie, "Men," p. 339.

<sup>3</sup>F. F. Bruce, Jesus: Lord & Savior, JL, p. 65.

### Conclusion

According to Walter Kasper, the mythological and polytheistic background of the expression "son of God" made it suspect under the strict monotheism of the Old Testament. Old Testament references to "sons of God" never relate to descent or any natural connection, but only to election, mission, obedience, privilege, love, and service.<sup>1</sup> The basic idea was that of a special nearness to God, with special privileges conferred by Him. The application of the title to the nation of Israel and its people culminated in its application to the king. This in turn found its fulfillment in the Messiah, who summed up royalty in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Geza Vermes concludes that the use of "son(s) of God" to refer to angels and to Israel (and Israelites) did not influence New Testament Christology. He admits that the relationship of every Jew as "son" would not give Jesus the distinction that is intended by the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> Likewise Hugh McDonald says that the title is not a synonym for Messiah in the New Testament. The messianic flavor of the title does not give the ultimate sense of the term as applied to Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Longenecker, however, claims that the corporate and royal Son of God motifs were brought together in early Jewish Christianity in its view of Jesus. The corporate view, he says, can be seen in John 10:34-

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<sup>1</sup>Kasper, p. 109. He says that the status of sonship rests purely on adoption, with a background of Old Testament theocratic hopes.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh D. McDonald, Jesus--Human and Divine, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup>Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup>McDonald, p. 91.

36, and the royal sonship view is shown in the application of 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7 to Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

But how did references to the divine adoption or legitimation of Davidic kings come to be applied in such a forceful fashion to the eschatological Messiah? Craigie bases a response on the centrality of the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament, God was the universal king, and His earthly representative was His "son," the Davidic king. At the exile (586 B.C.), the line of reigning Davidic kings came to an end. The prophets (particularly Jeremiah and Ezekiel) then predicted a New Covenant, which implied a new kingship. Since the Davidic Covenant was eternal, the Davidic kings would have to play a part in any future kingship. The concept of the "Anointed one" or Messiah developed an eschatological sense, referring to a major personage of a future work of God (cf. Dan. 9:25). The central theme of Jesus' ministry was the kingdom of God (cf. Mark 1:14-15) and Himself as King. Since the "Anointed one" (Messiah) of Psalm 2:2 was king, Jesus could be called Messiah or Christ. And since this king was called God's son in Psalm 2:7, Jesus too could be designated the Son of God. Thus Psalm 2:7 was seen by the early Christians as applying specifically to Jesus (cf. Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5), and other parts of Psalm 2 were taken as depicting the opposition to Jesus by earthly rulers (cf. Acts 4:24-28). The Davidic kings never attained worldwide dominion, but Jesus' dominion will climax in universal authority (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 11:15;

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<sup>1</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, p. 99.

19:16).<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful, however, that this presentation of the purely messianic origin and meaning of the Christological title "Son of God" can stand the weight of the New Testament data. From the Old Testament use of the term the following conclusions can be suggested:

1. The term "son," when used of Israel and king, emphasizes the son's special relationship to God. This relationship focuses on divine election, authority, love, and care, and the submission, obedience, and special position of the son in the will and plan of God.

2. The concept of "son" as found in Psalms 2:7; 89:26-27 assumes a future ideal, which was never historically fulfilled during the Davidic monarchy.

3. The "begetting" of the king (son) in Psalm 2:7 is a divine pronouncement concerning the place of the king in God's covenant and his future authority as ruler in God's kingdom.

4. The title "the Son of God" is never specifically applied to the Messiah in the Old Testament.

5. Nevertheless the language of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:14) and of poetic reflections on this covenant as actualized within the Davidic dynasty laid the groundwork for the description of the future Messiah as the Son of God. In fact these passages would be incomplete without the arrival of an ideal, messianic Son who could exercise the kind of universal authority and power referred to in Psalms 2; 89; and 110.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Craigie, pp. 68-69.

<sup>2</sup>Ballentine argues that Psalms 2 and 110 played an increasingly

6. Though both the basis and the necessity of applying the Son of God title to the Messiah were laid in the Old Testament, this fact alone does not account for the prominence given to the title in all the Gospels and throughout much of the rest of the New Testament. The Old Testament merely laid the conceptual and linguistic groundwork.

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important role in the messianic expectation of Israel about the time of Christ ("The Royal Psalms," p. 61).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TITLE "SON OF GOD" IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

The term "Ancient Judaism" as used here refers to all non-Christian, extrabiblical Jewish literature in the intertestamental and early rabbinic periods, including the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha,<sup>1</sup> the Qumran and rabbinic literature, and the writings of such men as Josephus and Philo. A distinction will be made in this literature between Palestinian and Hellenistic tendencies (so far as possible), though this writer recognizes that such a clear distinction cannot be sharply maintained.

A distinction will also be made between divine sonship in the corporate sense (that of Israel and its citizens) and divine sonship in the individual sense (righteous people, the Messiah, etc.). Here again, an overlap will be seen between the corporate and individual senses with regard to any distinction between the covenantal election of the nation and the practical righteousness of individual Israelites. The figure of the righteous man as found in the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach fulfills the characteristics of sonship that have gone unfulfilled by Israel as a whole (intimacy and obedience).

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<sup>1</sup>Concerning the value and dating of the Pseudepigrapha, see James H. Charlesworth, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament, pp. 27-44; idem, "Research on the Historical Jesus Today," PSB 6 (1985):98-115.

### Figurative Sonship

As in the Old Testament the word "son" often has a figurative connotation, indicating that the person shares in or reflects as his identity the qualities of whoever serves as his "father." For example, there are sons of wisdom (Sir. 4:11), sons of the prophets (Tob. 4:12; cf. 5:13), sons of the Law (i.e., scribes, 2 Baruch 46:4), sons of aliens (1 Macc. 3:45), sons of men (Judith 8:12; Wis. 9:6; Sir. 17:30; Prayer of Azariah 60; 1 Esdras 4:37), and of course "sons of the almighty and living God of heaven" (3 Macc. 6:28; cf. Jub. 1:24-25; 2 Esdras 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9). The term "son of God" certainly retains this characteristic in ancient Judaism.

### Corporate Sonship: Israel

#### Palestinian Judaism

In the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, God is presented as a loving Father who draws Israel back to Himself as His son. God will bring His kingdom and destroy Israel's enemies on account of His sons.<sup>1</sup> As God's sons, Israelites are under God's guidance and protection.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Assumption of Moses 10:1-3. Some writers use the term with reference to Israelites in an eschatological context: Jub. 1:23-28; Pss. Sol. 17:28-30; Sib. Or. 3. 702-04; Test. Levi 18:8, 12, 13; Test. Judah 24:3. In the present, God as their Father is disciplining them for their sins: Pss. Sol. 13:8, 9; 18:4; Wis. 12:19-21; 2 Baruch 13:9. In other passages the ethical connotations of sonship are not stated: 3 Macc. 6:28; 7:6; Additions to Esther 16:16; Judith 9:4; Wis. 9:7; 16:10; Pirke Aboth 3:19. See Erminie Huntress, "'Son of God' in Jewish Writings Prior to the Christian Era," *JBL* 54 (1935):118-19; Benjamin W. Bacon, "Jesus the Son of God," *HThR* 2 (1909):299-301.

<sup>2</sup>Assumption of Moses 10:3.

Those who are God's sons in truth will receive His majesty,<sup>1</sup> and God will rejoice in His sons forever.<sup>2</sup>

In Jubilees 1:25-26, God tells Israel, "I will be their Father and they shall be My children. And they all shall be called children of the living God . . . I am their Father . . . I love them." Israel as God's son should live in righteousness.<sup>3</sup> In Jubilees, physical descent from Jacob makes one part of God's children.<sup>4</sup> Israel's sonship carries ethical accountability.

Israel is called God's "firstborn" son a number of times.<sup>5</sup> In 4 Ezra 6:58, the suffering of "your people whom you have called your firstborn, your only begotten" is lamented. Ethiopic Enoch 62:11 says that God will take vengeance on those who mistreat His elect children. Israelites are called the "sons of heaven" in 101:1.

God is called Father only once in the extant Qumran literature: "a father to all the sons of Thy truth" (1QH 9:35). But Israel as God's son is a common motif in rabbinical writings and sayings.<sup>6</sup> The Old Testament emphasis on God's election and "begetting" of Israel is

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<sup>1</sup>Testament of Levi 18:8; cf. Testament of Judah 24:3.

<sup>2</sup>Testament of Levi 18:12-13.

<sup>3</sup>Jubilees 1:25. On this text cf. Lars Hartman, "Taufe, Geist und Sohnschaft," in Jesus in der Verkündigung der Kirche, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>R. H. Charles, ed., The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, 2 vols., 2:12-13. Cf. Jubilees 2:20; 19:29; Testament of Levi 1:2; 4:2.

<sup>5</sup>Sirach 36:12; Jubilees 2:20; 19:29; 4 Ezra 6:58; Pseudo-Philo Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 32. 10.

<sup>6</sup>The rabbinic literature did not begin to take written form until after ca. A.D. 135. But the rabbinic traditions reflect earlier thinking.



replaced by the concept that God's sons are those who obey the Torah. Rabbi Judah ben Shalom (ca. A.D. 370), in a Midrash on Deuteronomy, says, "When the Israelites do the will of God they are known as the sons of God; when they do not do God's will they are not God's sons."<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Aqiba asserts, "Beloved are the Israelites; for they are called the sons of God. It was declared to them as a special love that they are called God's sons."<sup>2</sup> The Midrash on Psalm 7 claims that all parts of the Old Testament speak of the divine sonship of Israel, mentioning Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 42:1; 52:13; Psalms 2:7; 110:1.<sup>3</sup>

#### Hellenistic Judaism

God judges His son Israel (Wisdom of Solomon 12:21) and disciplines them for their sins (2 Baruch 13:9-10). Yet He supports Israel as a father does his son (3 Macc. 7:6), healing them from the "teeth of venomous serpents" (Wis. 12:19). Through them God wanted to give the light of the Law to the world (18:4). He gave them kings to rule them as judges (9:7). God loves His son Israel; His people are His sons insofar as they fulfill God's purpose for them (16:26; 18:4). He warns them as a father, but rejects others (11:10; cf. 3 Macc. 7:6). Israel is called "thy beloved sons" (Judith 9:4), and possesses God's house (9:13). The sons of God will live peacefully around the temple in the age to come (Sibylline Oracles 3. 703-04). The Egyptians recognized

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<sup>1</sup>Jkiddushin 1. 8; TNT, s.v. "υἱός," by Eduard Lohse, 8:360; James R. Edwards, "The Son of God: Its Antecedents in Judaism and Hellenism and Its Use in the Earliest Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Aboth 3. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Midrash on Psalms 2. 9.

Israel as God's son after their firstborn sons were killed (Wis. 18:13). Much later King Artaxerxes, according to the Additions to Esther, proclaimed that the Jews were governed by righteous laws and were "sons of the Most High" (16:15-16). And according to 3 Maccabees 6:28, Ptolemy IV Philopator calls the Jews "the sons of the almighty living God in heaven," when he sets them free and allows them to return home in peace.

Israel is called God's "firstborn, only-begotten son" in the Psalms of Solomon 18:4. In 18:8, the same idea is applied to a righteous individual. Israelites are described as "sons of God" in 17:27. God is "he that begat us" in the Sibylline Oracles (3. 726). The intimacy between God and Israel involves both a close filial relationship and discipline. Israel is called "thy children" (5. 202) and "children of heaven" (2 Macc. 7:34) and the "servant [παῦς] of God" (Pss. Sol. 12:6; 17:23, 30; Wis. 9:4; 12:7, 20; 19:6).

The title "Son of God" is not found in the writings of Josephus. He does, however, call God the Father of the human race<sup>1</sup> and of the Hebrew people.<sup>2</sup> He shows that he is opposed to mythical ideas of sons begotten by God by the way he restates 2 Samuel 7:14.<sup>3</sup> For Josephus, God is the Creator of mankind, not their Begetter.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Josephus Antiquities 1. 20, 230; 2. 152; 4. 262.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5. 93.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 7. 93. Cf. idem Bellum Judaicum 7. 344.

<sup>4</sup>TDNT, s.v. "υἱός," by Eduard Schweizer, 8:355.

### Individual Sonship

#### The righteous man

Palestinian Judaism. During the intertestamental period, God came to be thought of as the Father of the righteous remnant or the righteous individual in Israel, rather than simply the Father of Israel as a whole. This brought about both a restriction of the idea of God's Fatherhood and a greater universality in its application. As T. W. Manson says, "The relation is in process of passing from the national and particular to become something individual and universal."<sup>1</sup> The idea of the righteous man became almost a model or ideal type, especially in intertestamental literature. His primary characteristic is his obedience to God--humble, servant-like submission to God's will. The concept of the humiliation and exaltation of the righteous man is found in 1 Samuel 2:6-8; Job 22:29; Proverbs 29:23; Daniel 4:34; and Sirach 3:17-18, among many others.<sup>2</sup>

Sirach says, "Be like a father to orphans, and instead of a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than does your mother" (4:10; the Hebrew text reads, "then God will call you His son"<sup>3</sup>). Here a righteous man is viewed as God's son because of his conduct. And God's fatherly love for him exceeds even that of his mother. Sonship is inextricably linked with practical righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup>T. W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>See also John L. McKenzie, "The Divine Sonship of Men in the Old Testament," CBQ 7 (1945):332-33.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, p. 42.

In Sirach 23:1, the righteous man who is under attack by the wicked prays, "O Lord, Father and Ruler of my life, do not abandon me to their counsel." In 23:4 he again calls God "Lord, Father and God of my life." Here the righteous individual pleads his dependence on the fatherly love of God. The Hebrew text of 51:10 also contains an individual address to God: "You are my father."<sup>1</sup>

In the Testament of Levi, Levi is told by an angel, "The Most High has given heed to your prayer that you be delivered from wrongdoing, that you should become a son to him, as minister and priest in his presence" (4:2). Here God's son is His anointed priest.

The obligation to obey God as Father is vigorously stressed in rabbinic Judaism. God is Father of those who do His will and fulfill the Torah, though His fatherly love extends to all of Israel.<sup>2</sup> God is repeatedly spoken of as the father of the individual Israelite, and is addressed as "our Father" (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) in liturgical prayers.<sup>3</sup> However, this is done in Hebrew, not Aramaic (אֱלֹהֵינוּ, not אֱלֹהֵינוּ), and the community as a whole addresses God as "our Father."<sup>4</sup> Jeremias states, "When the

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<sup>1</sup>Schweizer, p. 354. See also Sirach 14:3: "it is thy providence, O Father, that steers its [the ship's] course." The Greek text of Sirach 23:1, 4, contains "O Lord, Father and ruler of my life" and "O Lord, Father and God of my life," but the Hebrew original may have read, "O God of my father" (cf. Exod. 15:2; Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament, pp. 16-17; idem, The Prayers of Jesus, pp. 28-29).

<sup>2</sup>See bKiddushin 36a; Jeremias, Message, p. 15; C. G. Montefiore, Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings, p. 114. Montefiore lists a number of rabbinic statements which picture the debate over whether disobedient Israelites could rightly be called God's sons (ibid.).

<sup>3</sup>Jeremias, Message, pp. 15-16; idem, Prayers, pp. 21-29; NIDMIT, s.v. "Prayer," by Colin Brown, 2:865-66.

<sup>4</sup>Jeremias, Message, p. 16; idem, Prayers, pp. 24-26, 109-11.

individual calls God his heavenly Father, it is always because God is the heavenly Father of Israel and because the individual knows that he is a member of the people of God."<sup>1</sup>

Jeremias concludes that there is no example of the use of "Abba" (without a suffix) as an address to God in any Jewish literature, since the term represents familiar language derived from the chatter of children.<sup>2</sup> Johanan ben Zakkai (ca. A.D. 50-80) was apparently the first to use the designation "heavenly Father."<sup>3</sup> Thereafter, when the rabbis speak of God as Father, they regularly add "heavenly" or "who is in heaven." But there are only seven occurrences in the Mishnah and eleven in the Tosephta.<sup>4</sup> Jeremias says that the rabbis expressed two major convictions in calling God "Father": (1) the obligation to obey God, that is, to fulfill the Torah, and (2) the faith that God is the one who

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 23. Jeremias says, "To date nobody has produced one single instance in Palestinian Judaism where God is addressed as 'my Father' by an individual person" (Message, p. 16; Prayers, p. 29). The few instances in Hellenistic Judaism, he says, are due to Greek influence.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 111. Cf. bBerakoth 40a; bSanhedrin 70b. Jeremias says, moreover, that "Father" was not a common designation for God in the Judaism of the time of Jesus. There are only a few instances from Palestine before the New Testament period (p. 15). There are only four passages in the Apocrypha from Palestine (Tobit 13:4; Sirach 51:10; possibly Sirach 23:1, 4), isolated examples in the Pseudepigrapha (Jubilees 1:24-28; 19:29), and only one instance thus far at Qumran (1QH 9:35). There are more instances in rabbinic literature.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 17: "the relative sparsity of occurrences continues." Rabbi Judah ben Tema (ca. A.D. 200) commands his hearers "to do the will of your Father who is in heaven" (Pirke Aboth 5. 23 [30]). Rabbi Nathan (ca. A.D. 160) speaks of being "loved of my Father who is in heaven" (Mekilta on Exodus 20:6). Other references by rabbis to God as "my Father in heaven" can be found in A. Lukyn Williams, "'My Father' in Jewish Thought of the First Century," JThS 31 (1929):44; idem, The Hebrew-Christian Messiah, pp. 313-15.

helps in time of need.<sup>1</sup>

Geza Vermes says that the rabbis held the conviction that saints and teachers (particularly Galilean miracle-working Hasidim) were commended in public by a heavenly voice, which spoke of the rabbi as "my son."<sup>2</sup> He thus concludes that probably "already during his life Jesus was spoken of and addressed by admiring believers as son of God" in this fashion.<sup>3</sup> Such a view, however, ignores the comparatively late date of the rabbinic texts. Still, Hengel concludes that the designation "my son" or "son of God" must have played a role in mystic or charismatic circles of Palestinian Judaism, and says that "the title 'Son of God' was not completely alien to Palestinian Judaism."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in 3 Enoch, a book of Jewish mysticism, Enoch is pictured as being caught up to heaven and transformed into an angel named Metatron. He is set on a throne beside God, given a position above all other angels, given the title "prince of the world" (30:2; 38:3), and is even called the "lesser Yahweh" (12:5; 48C:7). He is also called the "servant" of Yahweh (1:4; 10:3; 48D:1). Enoch is given the designation "young man" or "youth," which Hengel believes was a

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, pp. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup>Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew, p. 206. He refers especially to Talmudic statements concerning Hanina ben Dosa (cf. bTaanith 24b, 25a; bBerakoth 7a, 17b; bHullin 86a; bHagigah 15b).

<sup>3</sup>Vermes, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>Hengel, pp. 43, 45. For a survey of the rabbinic material, see Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, 6 vols., 3:15-20; Vermes, pp. 196-97, 206-13. Concerning rabbinic prayer to God as Father and rabbinic miracle-workers claiming a special relation to God as "son," see NIDNIT, s.v. "Son of God," by Otto Michel, 3:638; as well as Vermes, pp. 206-13.

substitute for such Christological titles as "Son" or "Son of man."<sup>1</sup> Rabbis began to warn against giving Metatron equality with God and thinking that there are two divine powers in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Hellenistic Judaism. In the Septuagint, the singular "son of God" is never used with the definite article, but always as a qualitative expression without the article. Even the plural is definite only in Genesis 6:4.<sup>3</sup> It is thus clear that there was some hesitation about using the title in any definite sense.<sup>4</sup> The hesitation to speak of the son of God was not as great in Hellenistic Judaism as it was in Palestinian Judaism, yet it was still rare.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most important statements concerning the righteous individual as God's son is found in the Wisdom of Solomon 2:12-20, where the wise man is called both a servant of God and a son of God.<sup>6</sup> The wicked man persecutes the righteous (2:12-19), and resolves to "condemn him to a shameful death" (2:20). The good behavior of the righteous man convicts the wicked of his evil thoughts (2:14), actions, and sins against the law (2:12). The enemies are also angry because the

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<sup>1</sup>Hengel, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47. Cf. 3 Enoch 16:2-5; Sanhedrin 38b; Hagigah 14a, 15a. Third Enoch may be dated ca. A.D. 400-600.

<sup>3</sup>Ernest de Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, ICC, p. 405.

<sup>4</sup>Schweizer, p. 355.

<sup>5</sup>The title was not used for θεῖος ἀνὴρ ("divine man"), according to Schweizer, p. 356.

<sup>6</sup>Klaus Berger, "Die königlichen Messiastraditionen des Neuen Testaments," NIS 20 (1973):33.

righteous man "professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child [or servant] of the Lord" (2:13). He "boasts that God is his father" (2:16). They therefore decide to persecute him and to test his faithfulness to God, "for if the righteous man is God's son, He will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries" (2:18).

Parallels may be drawn between this passage and Genesis 37:20; Psalms 94:21; 103:13; and Isaiah 50:6; 52:13--53:12; 63:16.<sup>1</sup> Especially in Isaiah 53 the theme of the suffering of the righteous man as the servant of the Lord has strong similarities. The words "servant" or "child" (παῦς) and "son" (υἱός) are related or synonymous throughout the passage. In fact the Syriac version has the same translation in both verses 13 and 18: "son of God."<sup>2</sup> The terms "sons" and "servants" are related also in 9:4, 7; 12:19-21 (cf. 2 Kings 16:7). The son in Wisdom 2 and the servant in Isaiah 53 have a similar relationship with God: filial love and obedient service. But there are also differences. In Wisdom 2, the righteous man suffers for himself, as a test of his individual faithfulness (cf. Wis. 2:18-20).<sup>3</sup> In Isaiah 53, the suffering of the servant focuses on suffering for the sins of others

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<sup>1</sup>See M. Jack Suggs, "Wisdom of Solomon, 2:10--5: a Homily Based on the Fourth Servant Song," *JBL* 76 (1957):26-33; Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 279. Suggs proposes that Wisdom of Solomon 2:10--5:23 is a homily based on the Servant of Yahweh concept of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. He suggests that the use of υἱός to describe the righteous man arose from a misunderstanding of the word παῦς in the LXX (pp. 31-33). Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, p. 94, says that the portrayal of the righteous man as God's son in Wisdom of Solomon 2:13-18 is alien to the Old Testament milieu.

<sup>2</sup>*TDNT*, s.v. "παῦς θεοῦ," by Joachim Jeremias, 5:678, n. 152.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Edwards, P. 34. Note the discussion in Gerhard Voss, *Die Christologie der lukanischen Schriften in Grundzügen*, pp. 90-92.



(Isa. 53:4-6, 10-12). This theme of substitutionary suffering is lacking in Wisdom 2.

Some have noticed a similarity between Wisdom 2:16-18, in which the adversaries question whether God will uphold His "son," and Matthew 27:43, in which the chief priests at the cross mock Jesus: "He trusts in God; let Him deliver him now, if He desires him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"<sup>1</sup> Beyond this Marshall says that Wisdom 2:13-18 shows that Jesus was the Son of God before His death and resurrection. It was because He was God's Son that God raised Him from the dead. Wisdom 2 assumes that if the righteous man is really God's son, then God will help him and deliver him from his enemies. The deliverance, says Marshall, came at the resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33-35; Rom. 1:4).<sup>2</sup>

As a result of God's faithfulness to His sons, in Wisdom 5:5 the wicked stand at the final judgment and say concerning the righteous man whom they persecuted on earth, "Why has he been numbered among the sons of God? And why is his lot among the saints?" They then admit that "the way of the Lord we have not known" (v. 7). Here "sons" and "saints" are virtually synonymous. The "son of God" is one whom God has

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<sup>1</sup>Huntress, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Development of Christology in the Early Church," TynB 18 (1967):86. Reginald H. Fuller says that the Wisdom of Solomon was not constitutive for the Palestinian Aramaic stratum of the New Testament, and therefore was not determinative for the use of the title by the earliest Palestinian church (The Foundations of New Testament Christology, pp. 70-72). But he interprets the "sons of God" and "saints" of Wisdom of Solomon 5:5 as Old Testament heroes, and suggests that Jesus was designated "Son of God" in the Hellenistic Jewish Church because He was identified with such Old Testament heroes as the eschatological Mosaic prophet and the Davidic Messiah, emphasizing such biblical features as faithful adherence to the Law amid persecution and final vindication by God.

found holy and righteous. The righteous man will be vindicated by God and his adversaries will be condemned and discredited.

In the Psalms of Solomon, God is compared to a father in His love and discipline of the righteous: He "corrects the righteous as a beloved son, and his chastisement is as that of a firstborn" (13:9). In 3 Maccabees, God is addressed as "Father": "O Father, You destroyed Pharaoh" (6:4); "You restored him [Jonah], O Father" (6:8).

According to Philo of Alexandria, not everyone nor every Israelite is a son of God, but only the one who does good.<sup>1</sup> All those who have knowledge of the uniqueness of God are called "sons of the one God."<sup>2</sup> Those who are still unfit to be called God's sons should submit themselves to the Logos, God's firstborn, so that at least they may become sons of the Logos, God's "invisible image."<sup>3</sup> Only the "firstborn" of God can make men worthy of being called "sons of God" through spiritual rebirth. There is a second birth without a mother which makes one a son of God.<sup>4</sup> Philo personifies the Logos, the spiritual world of ideas, not only as an archangel, a mediator, a messenger of God, and the bearer of God's image, but also as God's eldest and firstborn son.<sup>5</sup> The Logos creates, sustains, and orders the

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<sup>1</sup>Philo De Specialibus Legibus 1. 318.

<sup>2</sup>Idem De Confusione Linguarum 145.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Idem De Vita Mosis 2. 209-10; Quaestiones in Exodum 2. 46; Legum Allegoriae 3. 181, 217; Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres 62; De Cherubim 49; De Congressu quaerendae Eriditionis gratiae 7.

<sup>5</sup>Idem De Somniis 1. 215; De Confusione Linguarum 146.

world,<sup>1</sup> though the cosmos itself is a younger "son of God."<sup>2</sup> Philo rarely applies the term to historical figures.<sup>3</sup> He prefers to use the designation "man of God," following Old Testament models.<sup>4</sup> His use of the concept of sonship shows wide variation.

Josephus does not recognize any men as being God's sons in a special way. "Father" is not found as a mode of address in the prayers he includes in his writings. When he does call God "Father," it is part of a fixed, figurative terminology.<sup>5</sup>

Dunn concludes from Josephus and Philo that pre-Christian Jewish writers used extravagant language attributing deity to individuals without intending it to be taken literally and without lessening the distinction between God and man. He says, however, that the idea of a son of God or divine individual descending from heaven to redeem men is absent in the Jewish literature.<sup>6</sup>

The Book of Joseph and Asenath, a Hellenistic Jewish romance,

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<sup>1</sup>Idem De Agricultura 51; De Fuga et Inventione 112.

<sup>2</sup>Idem Quod Deus Immutabilis 31-32; De Confusione Linguarum 97.

<sup>3</sup>See idem De Sobrietate 56-57.

<sup>4</sup>Hengel, p. 55. Philo said concerning Moses that God "appointed him as god" in a relative sense (De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini 9) and that Moses was "no longer man but God" (Quod Omnis Probus Liber 43; cf. De Somniis 2. 189; De Vita Mosis 1. 158; 2. 288; Quaestiones in Exodum 2. 29). See also Carl H. Holladay, Theios Anēr in Hellenistic Judaism, SBLDS, pp. 103-98.

<sup>5</sup>See also Holladay, pp. 67-102; Michel, p. 638. Josephus reports the possibility of speculation by others that Moses had been taken or returned to deity (Antiquities 3. 96-97; 4. 326). See James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Dunn, p. 19. On the validity of Dunn's method and results, cf. Carl R. Holladay, "New Testament Christology: Some Considerations of Method," NT 25 (1983):257-78.

speaks of the saved community as consisting of sons and daughters of the living God (19:18). The sons of the Most High eat manna (16:14). Asenath and other non-Jews several times call Joseph "son of God" because of his beauty and wisdom.<sup>1</sup> In 6:2-6 Joseph is called "this son of God," and in 23:10 his brothers acknowledge him as a son of God. His divine sonship is contrasted with human opinion that he is merely a shepherd's son (13:13). It is strongly affirmed, however, that Jacob is his father (7:5; 22:4).<sup>2</sup> Here the title probably means that Joseph belongs to God's sphere (see 13:10; 21:3).

In his commentary on John, Origen quotes from the Prayer of Joseph, a Jewish apocryphon.<sup>3</sup> Jacob-Israel appears as an incarnate "archangel" who was "created before all the works of creation." He descends to earth as Jacob, then fights and overcomes the envious angel Uriel at the Jabbok River (Gen. 32:24-29). He says of himself, "I am the firstborn of all living beings to whom God gave life." Hengel says that Exodus 4:22 ("Israel is my firstborn son") is apparently interpreted here in terms of "a supreme, pre-existent spiritual being . . . which takes human form in Jacob and becomes the tribal ancestor of the people of Israel."<sup>4</sup> Though this personage is not called "Son of God" in any divine sense, his preexistence and incarnation have New Testament Christological parallels.

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<sup>1</sup>Hengel, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Schweizer, p. 356. The story may be dated in the late first century A.D., or even later, and contains Christian reworking.

<sup>3</sup>Origen Commentarii in John 2. 31. 189-90. The date of the Prayer is second century A.D.

<sup>4</sup>Hengel, p. 48; cf. 3 Enoch 44:10.

There is yet another source from which many scholars suggest that the concept of Christ's preexistent divine Sonship arose: the personification of preexistent Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31; Wisdom of Solomon 7:22--8:1; Sirach 24:1-22. Robinson says that the concept of preexistence which involves the hypostatization of an individual heavenly person did not exist in pre-Christian Judaism.<sup>1</sup> Instead preexistent Wisdom or Logos became embodied in a single (purely) human individual (Jesus) "who was so faithful a reproduction of it as to be its complete reflection and incarnation."<sup>2</sup> As Son He was uniquely the reflection of God's person and character.<sup>3</sup>

Hengel and Dunn conclude that the early church transferred to Jesus the characteristics of the hypostatized and personified divine Wisdom that had been developed in Jewish wisdom literature.<sup>4</sup> Kim lists five passages in which some scholars believe Jesus identified Himself with the divine Wisdom--Matthew 11:16-19, 25-27, 28-30; 23:34-36, 37-39. However, he concludes that in Jesus' teaching there was merely a preparation for such an identification. The early church realized that Jesus superseded and had taken the place of the Torah as God's true mediator of revelation and salvation. Since the Torah was thought of as the embodiment of divine Wisdom (Sir. 24:23; Baruch 3:37-38; 4 Macc.

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<sup>1</sup>John A. T. Robinson, The Human Face of God, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Hengel, pp. 66-76; Dunn, pp. 163-212, 259-63; cf. Reginald H. Fuller and Pheme Perkins, Who Is This Christ?, pp. 53-66. For a discussion of the enormous differences between Jesus' teaching and this personified Wisdom, however, see R. T. France, "The Worship of Jesus," in Christ the Lord, p. 22.

1:17; 7:21-23; 8:7), the apostle Paul realized at his conversion that Christ was the true revelation of God, the true embodiment of the divine Wisdom, and therefore Wisdom itself. Kim believes that Paul therefore transferred to Christ all the predicates of Wisdom—preexistence and mediatorship— which rabbinic Judaism had already transferred to the Torah (cf. 2 Cor. 3:4--4:6).<sup>1</sup>

It seems clear from the evidence presented thus far that in pre-Christian Judaism the term "son of God" had primary reference to individual Israelites who demonstrated practical righteousness and faithfulness to the God who had chosen Israel as His "firstborn son." There is no thought of a unique "Son," except in later Jewish speculations and in Philo (who uses the term to personify God's wisdom and creation in a way that bears little relation to early Christianity). Any sense of uniqueness must be sought in its messianic context.

### The Messiah

Warfield suggests that the meager use of the Son of God title in Jewish speculation may be due to the "unwontedness of a transcendental doctrine of the Messiah in Judaism."<sup>2</sup> It is certainly true that, as Lohse states,

Israel took good care lest the designation son of God might be falsely linked to the physical divine sonship which was so widely spoken of in the ancient Orient. It thus employed "son of God" only

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<sup>1</sup>Seyoon Kim, The Origin of Paul's Gospel, pp. 123-27.

<sup>2</sup>Benjamin Warfield, The Lord of Glory, p. 134. Origen claims that a Jew would not speak of a prophecy concerning the coming "Son of God," but rather concerning the coming "Christ of God" (Contra Celsum 1. 49).

when quoting the Messianic promises and elsewhere avoided this term for the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

In intertestamental literature the terms "Messiah" and "Son of God" are both distinct and related. As noted above, the righteous man who suffers and is later vindicated and exalted can be called God's son. On the other hand the Messiah is often presented as the expected King who is given His authority at the end of the age (see 2 Baruch 39:7—40:2; 72:2—74:3; Pss. Sol. 17-18). Neither suffering nor exaltation is attributed to Him.

However, there are a variety of messianic concepts in the literature.<sup>2</sup> In 4 Ezra the Messiah is presented both in human terms (7:28-30) and as preexistent and supernatural (12:32; 13:25-26; 14:9). The Messiah is called "my son" in 4 Ezra 7:28-29 ("my son the Messiah"); 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9; Ethiopic Enoch 105:2; Life of Adam and Eve 42:2-5; but the authenticity of each of these passages is questioned.

In 4 Ezra 7:28, instead of "my son the Messiah," the Syriac and Ethiopic versions read "my Messiah." An Arabic version reads "the Messiah." The Armenian version has "the Messiah of God." And the Georgian version reads "the elect my Messiah."<sup>3</sup> In 7:29, "my son the Messiah" is rendered "my servant the Messiah" in the Ethiopic version.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lohse, p. 360

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Voss, pp. 81-83; M. de Jonge, "The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus," *NT* 8 (1966):132-48.

<sup>3</sup>James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., 1:537, n. e.

<sup>4</sup>Furthermore in each of these passages the oldest extant Latin manuscript (from an earlier Greek version) reads *filius meus*, which many scholars believe arose from Greek *παῦς*, meaning "servant" or "child." Thus many see an original *παῦς* or Hebrew *עֶבֶד* in these statements (*TDNT*,

Huntress says that 4 Ezra was compiled after A.D. 70, and suggests that its references to "my son the Messiah" represent Jewish fusion of the preexistent Son of Man with the human Messiah who would rule 400 years and die.<sup>1</sup>

In Ethiopic Enoch 105:2, God tells His people to rejoice "until I and my son are united with them forever." The Greek manuscript, however, on which the Ethiopic version is said to depend, omits chapter 105 entirely.<sup>2</sup> Therefore a question exists whether the statement was ever part of the Greek version.

In the life of Adam and Eve 42:2-5, the Messiah (anointed one) is three times called the Son of God who will come to earth at the end of the age, resurrect the dead, be baptized in the Jordan River, and give mercy to those who are born of water and of Spirit. The entire section, however, is believed to be a Christian interpolation.<sup>3</sup>

"Son of God" as a term for the Messiah is lacking in the Psalms

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s.v. "παῦς θεοῦ," by Joachim Jeremias, 5:681; Lohse, p. 361; Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, p. 282). The Messiah is in some sense called God's servant in Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 3:8; 2 Baruch 70:9; and the Targums on Isaiah 42:1; 43:10; 52:13; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Zechariah 3:8. It should also be noted that 4 Ezra 13:32, 37, has been suspected of containing Christian interpolations (cf. Charles, 2:618-19).

<sup>1</sup>Huntress, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>The manuscript in question is the Chester Beatty papyrus fragment, which contains 97:6--104, 106--7 (cf. Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha, 1:6). Charles, 2:277, claims that the chapter is also dubious internally, since its content does not seem to fit well with the more homogeneous unit of chapters 91-104. On the passages in Ethiopic Enoch and 4 Ezra, see Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology, part I: The Proclamation of Jesus, p. 258, n. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Charles, 2:144.



of Solomon.<sup>1</sup> Instead, "son(s) of God" refers to Israel and Israelites.<sup>2</sup> Lohse therefore concludes that "thus far there is no clear instance to support the view that in pre-Christian times Judaism used the title 'son of God' for the Messiah."<sup>3</sup> Huntress, however, says, "Probably we should conclude that the use of 'Son of God' for the Messiah was not customary in Jewish thought at the time of Jesus; but we cannot prove it non-existent, and its use would be natural enough."<sup>4</sup>

The messianic Son of God title is not clearly and expressly used in the Qumran literature. But the scrolls do refer to Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 in connection with Qumran's messianic expectation.<sup>5</sup> There are several connections between the Messiah and the Son. A messianic Florilegium from Cave 4 says concerning 2 Samuel 7:14: "I will be to him as a father, and he will be to me as a son. He is the Shoot of David, who will arise with the Interpreter of the Law" (4QFlor. 1:10-11).<sup>6</sup> Kim notes that this fragment (4QFlor. 1:1-13) is a peshar on 2 Samuel 7:10-14 conflated with such supporting texts as Exodus 15:17-18 and Amos 9:11. In the text quoted, the future son of David who will be God's son

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Christoph Burger, Jesus als Davidsson, FRLANT, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Huntress, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Lohse, p. 361.

<sup>4</sup>Huntress, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup>Lohse, p. 361.

<sup>6</sup>On the relationship of this passage to 2 Samuel 7, cf. J. M. Allegro, "Fragments of a Qumran Scroll of Eschatological Midrāsīm," JBL 77 (1958):350-54; Dale Goldsmith, "Acts 13:33-37: A Peshar on II Samuel 7," JBL 87 (1968):321-24; W. R. Lane, "A New Commentary Structure in 4Q Florilegium," JBL 78 (1959):343-46; and Y. Yadin, "A Midrash on 2 Sam. vii and Ps. i-ii (4Q Florilegium)," IEJ 9 (1959):95-98.

is identified as "the shoot of David," indicating that the prophecy of Nathan has been blended with such related messianic prophecies as Isaiah 4:2; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12-13.<sup>1</sup>

Fuller concludes from this fragment that it has provided "positive certainty" that "son of God" was used as a messianic title in pre-Christian Judaism.<sup>2</sup> He ignores the fact, however, that this fragment does not use the term "son of God," nor does it present the designation in any sense as a title.<sup>3</sup> Fuller states that "son of God" was just coming into use as a Messianic title in pre-Christian Judaism, and was ready to hand as a tool for the early Christians to use in interpreting Jesus of Nazareth." He adds, however, "It meant not a metaphysical relationship, but adoption as God's vice-gerent in his kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

An Aramaic fragment from cave 4 (4QpsDan Aa 1:7--2:4) may also attribute the title to the Messiah:

[But your son] shall be great upon the earth, [O King! All (men) shall] make [peace], and all shall serve [him. He shall be called the son of] the [G]reat [God], and by his name shall he be named. He shall be hailed (as) the Son of God, and they shall call him Son of the Most High. As comets (flash) to the sight, so shall be their kingdom. (For some) years they shall rule upon the earth and shall trample everything (under foot); people shall trample upon people, city upon city . . . until there arises the people of God, and everyone rests from the sword.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kim, p. 110; Burger, pp. 19-23; Hartman, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Fuller, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Hartman, p. 90; Richard N. Longenecker, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," NTS 20 (1974):393; idem, "The Aramaic

The fragmentary nature of the text makes its translation tentative, however, and it is unclear whether the "Son of God" mentioned is the (apocalyptic) Messiah<sup>1</sup> or a historical ruler such as Alexander Balas (ca. 150-145 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> What is clear is that the term "Son of God" is applied to someone who "shall be great on the earth" and whom "all shall serve." The fragment should be dated in the last third of the first century B.C.<sup>3</sup> There is no specific reference to an "anointed one" or Messiah. There are possible parallels to Luke 1:32-35 and to Daniel 7:13.<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer concludes, "There is no indication that the person to whom the titles 'Son of God' or 'Son of the Most High' are given in this text is a messianic figure; we are still looking for extra-NT instances in which such titles have been applied to an anointed agent of Yahweh."<sup>5</sup>

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Language and the Study of the New Testament," JBL 99 (1980):14-15.

<sup>1</sup>In Fitzmyer's view an apocalyptic setting is indicated by references to coming distress, flashing comets, and future deliverance. But he says that there is no evidence that the title refers to an anointed (messianic) agent of Yahweh (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, A Wandering Aramean, p. 106). He further suggests that this pre-Christian use of the title at Qumran makes it possible that the title was used for Jesus at Jerusalem before the Church carried the Christian message to the Hellenistic world. He notes also that it carries no sense of preexistence, miraculous conception, or divine incarnation that the title carries in places in the New Testament (p. 107).

<sup>2</sup>Fitzmyer, "Contribution," pp. 391-92. See also John M. Allegro, "Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature," JBL 75 (1956):174-88.

<sup>3</sup>Fitzmyer, A Wandering Aramean, p. 105; idem, "Contribution," p. 391.

<sup>4</sup>Kim claims that this passage presents a messianic interpretation of the Son of Man as the Son of God (Seyoon Kim, "The 'Son of Man'" as the Son of God, pp. 21-22).

<sup>5</sup>Fitzmyer, "Language," p. 15; cf. John R. Donahue, "Temple, Trial, and Royal Christology," in The Passion in Mark, pp. 72-73. Jonge agrees that "the use of the term 'messianic expectation' should be

Another Qumran fragment apparently states that the birth of the Messiah will be the work of God "when (God) causes the Messiah to be born among them" (1QSa 2:11-12). It should be noted, however, that the Son of God title is not in the text. Arguing from Hebrew syntax and usage, Robert Gordis translates the statement as follows: "When (God) begets the Messiah, with them shall come the Priest, head of all the Congregation of Israel." He claims that the passage is "highly important as a source for the concept of a Divinely begotten Messiah."<sup>1</sup> Morton Smith, however, suggests that the setting of the text is not eschatological and that the "anointed one" referred to is not the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Lohse concludes that "the title 'Son of God' is not used in the Dead Sea Scrolls either except in OT quotations. . . . Judaism in pre-Chr. times obviously avoided employing the title 'Son of God' in order to ward off misunderstanding of the term in the non-Jewish world."<sup>3</sup> But surely this does not fully explain why the title should not be used at Qumran, which had a strong messianic hope and little contact with the non-Jewish world.

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restricted to the expectation of a redeemer who is actually called Messiah" (p. 133).

<sup>1</sup>Robert Gordis, "The 'Begotten' Messiah in the Qumran Scrolls," *VT* 7 (1957):194. On the basis of this fragment, Kee says that Psalm 2 was interpreted by sectarian Jews of the first century as messianic and eschatological. He concludes that "one of the ways of designating the redemptive figure of the end-time was 'Son of God'" (Howard C. Kee, *Community of the New Age*, p. 122).

<sup>2</sup>Morton Smith, "'God's Begetting the Messish' in 1QSa," *NIS* 5 (1959):224.

<sup>3</sup>Lohse, p. 362.

On the basis of the Qumran testimonia, Matthew Black says that the origin of the Son title in the Davidic element of Jewish messianic tradition is now "fully certain, even if it is not the only source, in pre-Christian Judaism, of the whole christological concept of the Son."<sup>1</sup> He also concludes that the Christian understanding of the Davidic testimonia from 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 2:7; and Amos 9:11 had an important influence on the development of the Son of God Christology in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup>

Kingsbury admits, however, that the evidence from Qumran "does not yet prove that 'son of God' was employed in pre-Christian Judaism in a titular sense."<sup>3</sup> What the evidence does show, as Marshall suggests, is that "attention was being paid in Judaism to the significance of God's fatherly relationship to the messiah as his son, as expressed in 2 Sam. 7:14."<sup>4</sup> But further, there is no indication that Jesus or His apostles were influenced by Qumran thought.<sup>5</sup>

In rabbinic literature, the Messiah is never called the Son of God except with reference to Old Testament texts.<sup>6</sup> A Baraitha in bSukkah 52a relates Psalm 2:7 to the messianic Son of David. In a

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Black, "The Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," NIS 18 (1971):3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?" Interp 35 (1981):250; idem, The Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Son of God," by I. Howard Marshall, 3:637.

<sup>5</sup>F. F. Bruce, "The Background to the Son of Man Sayings," in Christ the Lord, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup>Lohse, p. 362.

Midrash on Psalm 2:7,<sup>1</sup> Rabbis Judan and Huna (ca. A.D. 350) each relate Psalm 2:7 to the Messiah. On the other hand various polemical sayings of the rabbis reject the concept that God could have a son.<sup>2</sup> The messianic interpretation of 2 Samuel 7:14 was soon discontinued, and Psalm 2:7 was reinterpreted merely to compare the relationship of the king to God as that of son to father.<sup>3</sup> Thus, as Lohse says, rabbinical Judaism attempted to eliminate the Son of God title from messianic expectation, and to interpret more figuratively the Old Testament passages in which the Messiah is called God's son.<sup>4</sup> Billerbeck concludes, "As far as we can see, in rabbinical literature 'Son of God' is not to be found as an independent messianic designation apart from a Scriptural quotation."<sup>5</sup>

It was noted in chapter three that 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2 were interpreted messianically in intertestamental and rabbinic Judaism. This fact and the several instances of connections between Messiah and Son of God mentioned above show that there was probably a growing

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<sup>1</sup>Midrash on Psalms 2. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Lohse, p. 362.

<sup>3</sup>See the Targum on Psalm 2.

<sup>4</sup>Lohse, p. 362. The Targums on the Psalms explain away each passage which refers to the Messiah as God's son. The Targum on Psalm 2:7 paraphrases, "You are dear to me as a son to a father, innocent as if I had this day created you." The Targum on Psalm 89:27 reads, "I will make him to be the firstborn among the kings of the house of Judah." William Manson attributes this to the reaction of abstract Jewish monotheism and to Jewish polemic against Christianity. In the Talmud the Messiah is called Son of God only when a messianic Old Testament passage makes use of the designation (William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 149).

<sup>5</sup>Strack and Billerbeck, 3:20.

tendency toward this identification by the first century A.D.<sup>1</sup> Psalms of Solomon 17:23-31 is a messianic passage that is apparently dependent on Psalm 2, though it omits any mention of sonship.<sup>2</sup> Scholarly opinion is divided on the importance of Psalm 2 for first-century messianic speculation,<sup>3</sup> but Fuller states bluntly that "insofar as the term Son of God is used in the earliest church, it comes from Ps. 2:7 and the Davidic-Messianic motive."<sup>4</sup>

Bousset<sup>5</sup>, Dalman<sup>6</sup>, Kümmel<sup>7</sup>, and Feneberg<sup>8</sup> deny that "Son of God"

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Fuller, p. 32; Huntress, p. 122. According to Schweizer though "Son of God" is never used as a title for the Messiah in pre-Christian Judaism, 2 Samuel 7:14 provides the basis for much Jewish speculation about the Messiah (Eduard Schweizer, "Gottessohn und Christus," in Theologie, p. 67).

<sup>2</sup>Huntress, p. 120; Hans-Jorg Steichele, Der leidende Sohn Gottes, 141-46.

<sup>3</sup>Werner Kramer says that since there is no evidence that Psalm 2:7 was applied to the Messiah in pre-Christian Judaism, it was apparently the Jewish Christian church which did so (Christ, Lord, Son of God, p. 109, n. 370). Vincent Taylor says that it is possible that Psalm 2:7 was interpreted messianically in certain Jewish circles, as Mark 12:35-37; 14:61 suggest (The Names of Jesus, p. 53). C. F. D. Moule says that Psalm 2 was "certainly interpreted messianically" in pre-Christian Judaism and that "to be God's son was . . . recognized as one of the Messiah's characteristics" (The Origin of Christology, p. 28). Evald Lövestam notes that there is much evidence of the use of allusions to Psalm 2 in the rabbinic literature, particularly with reference to the Messiah and the elect and their mutual enemies (Son and Saviour, pp. 17-23). Cf. also B. M. F. Van Iersel, "Der Sohn" in den synoptischen Jesusworten, SNT, pp. 106-10, 185-92; Dalman, pp. 269-72.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup>Bousset, pp. 92-94. "The whole of later Jewish apocalypticism was unacquainted with the messianic title 'Son of God'" (p. 94). This was grounded, he says, in the nature of Jewish piety.

<sup>6</sup>Dalman, p. 272.

<sup>7</sup>Werner G. Kümmel, Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte, p. 215.

<sup>8</sup>Wolfgang Feneberg, Der Markusprolog, p. 153.

was a common Jewish designation for the Messiah. But Cullmann says that "it is nevertheless difficult to assume that this royal attribute should not occasionally have been transferred also to the Messiah when we consider how closely related were the Jewish expectation of a Messiah and the idea of a king."<sup>1</sup> Hahn finds little evidence of the messianic use of the title in Palestinian Judaism, but he nevertheless concludes that the motif of divine sonship (appointment to dominion) was present, and that the titular use of such terms as "Son of the Blessed" was also common in pre-Christian tradition.<sup>2</sup> Jeremias goes so far as to say that "'Son of God' is completely unknown as a messianic title in Palestinian Judaism."<sup>3</sup> The same can be said of Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>4</sup> Thus Lövestam is forced to conclude:

The negative evidence of the sources as regards the direct naming of the Messiah as God's son shows . . . that this was in any case not a usual title for the Messiah in early Judaism. Thus, the existing Judaic material does not point to the conclusion that it is merely a matter of a messianic title current at that time which was applied to Jesus when, as in the Gospels, he is called "God's Son."<sup>5</sup>

#### The Teacher of Righteousness

The title "Teacher of Righteousness" in the Qumran literature can also be rendered "Righteous Teacher." References to him may be

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, p. 274. Cf. Rudolf K. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 1:50; C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup>Hahn, pp. 281-84.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremias, Proclamation, p. 258; cf. Schweizer, "Gottessohn und Christus," p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>Lövestam, p. 90.



found especially in the Habakkuk Commentary and the Damascus Document.<sup>1</sup> This Teacher is presented as being sent by God but opposed by the wicked. He suffered (1QHab 11:4-8) but preached against sin and called men to repentance and salvation (1QH 2-8). His authority rested in the Torah. He proclaimed a future salvation and called men to an ethical righteousness. To him God was ruler and judge. He called men to fulfill the Torah and all its commandments. Salvation was available only for the elect. He personifies the importance of the Law in intertestamental Judaism.

Some have attempted to see in this Teacher a model for the sonship of Jesus. But there are obviously fundamental differences between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 5:21-48; Rom. 10:4).<sup>2</sup> Unlike the righteous man of intertestamental literature, the Teacher of Righteousness did not emphasize the fatherhood of God. In fact, as mentioned above, God is called Father only once in all the extant Qumran literature (1QH 9:35).<sup>3</sup> Edwards concludes that "the Teacher of Qumran is neither the Messiah, nor a forerunner of the Messiah, nor an eschatological redeemer."<sup>4</sup> The Teacher apparently neither enjoyed nor proclaimed filial intimacy with God, and thus could by no means be called a "Son of God."

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<sup>1</sup>See William S. LaSor, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, pp. 106-16.

<sup>2</sup>See LaSor, pp. 106-30, 214-46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>4</sup>Edwards, p. 46.

### Conclusion

It is clear that the Son of God title as found in the New Testament could never have originated from the extant literature of pre-Christian Judaism. Parallels and similarities exist, but these are merely distant shadows of the claims presented by the Gospels for Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The growing individualization of Israelite sonship is based on the corporate sonship described in the Old Testament (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; etc.) and carried strongly into intertestamental and rabbinic literature. Under attack from paganism and Hellenization, the righteous remnant is portrayed as God's genuine sons. The concepts of divine love and human obedience are emphasized just as in the Old Testament.

Following the intensification of the dispersion during the first century A.D. and the growing conflict with Christianity, certain Jewish speculations took the "son of God" terminology to picture various Jewish heroes (Enoch, Joseph, Jacob, etc.) in ideal or semidivine terms.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>An interesting comparison may be made between Jesus' use of the titles Son of God and Son of Man. Kim disputes the idea that an apocalyptic Son of Man tradition was well-known at the time of Jesus. In fact Jesus' hearers sometimes did not understand His use of the title (cf. John 12:34—"Who is this 'Son of Man'?"). Kim suggests that "the messianic hope originating from Dan. 7.13 being at most marginal, Jesus' self-designation as 'the Son of Man' was not immediately understandable to ordinary people." Thus Jesus may have used the title both to reveal His identity to some and to hide it from others (Kim, pp. 35-36, 100). This reasoning can be equally applied to the title Son of God. Since this was not a messianic title in first-century Judaism, Jesus may have discussed His sonship precisely in order to reveal His true identity to His disciples and to distinguish His unique sonship from Old Testament terminology.

<sup>2</sup>On the similarities and differences between the Jewish speculations concerning Enoch and New Testament Christology, see Philip G. Davis, "The Mythic Enoch: New Light on Early Christology," Studies in Religion 13 (1984):337-43.

rabbis themselves developed conflicts over the use of such concepts.

But throughout there was a general hesitancy on the part of monotheistic Judaism to speak of "God's Son." The clear references to the Davidic king's sonship (2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:7; 89:26-27) and ultimately that of the Davidic Messiah were handled gently, so as not to carry the idea into forbidden territory.<sup>1</sup> It appears that the consciousness of the Messiah's divine sonship was present (in whatever terms this might be understood), but the term "Son of God" never reached the status of a title.<sup>2</sup> For a human being to apply it to himself, even while making a claim to messiahship, would naturally be taken as blasphemy. And certainly for an individual to claim to be the unique Son of God, to claim a unique intimacy with God as Father which was unshared with anyone else, would be unthinkable even in the wildest speculations of pre-Christian Judaism.

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<sup>1</sup>According to Davis, "'Son of God' never means in a Jewish text what it most often means in a Christian one, namely that the man who bears the title is also divine" (Davis, "The Mythic Enoch," p. 336).

<sup>2</sup>According to Schedl, in pre-Christian and rabbinic Judaism the expected Messiah remains a man, though God was said to prepare, bless, and love him more than others. His appearance was portrayed as fantastic and wonderful, but his sonship was acknowledged only as a declared "adoption formula" (Claus Schedl, Zur Christologie der Evangelien, p. 189).

## CHAPTER V

### THE TITLE "SON OF GOD" IN HELLENISTIC LITERATURE

The conquest of Palestine in 332 B.C. by Alexander the Great significantly changed the political and religious challenges for the Jews. Samaria was already considered a semipagan area.<sup>1</sup> During the third and second centuries B.C., Palestine became a battleground between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria. The Hellenization<sup>2</sup> of Palestine intensified during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), during which he attempted to destroy the Jewish religion and to make Palestine a buffer area between himself and the Roman presence in Egypt. He prohibited the Jews from keeping their laws and from observing the Sabbath, festivals, sacrifices, and circumcision. Copies of the Torah were destroyed and the altar at Jerusalem was dedicated to Zeus.<sup>3</sup>

The Maccabean revolt of 167-164 B.C. restored political self-determination to Palestine, but the process of cultural and political

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<sup>1</sup>Wayne A Brindle, "The Origin and History of the Samaritans," GrThJ 5 (Spring 1984):47-75. See John 4:10.

<sup>2</sup>Hellenization can be described as the interpenetration of Greek and Oriental culture, so that non-Greeks became Greek in their language, world view, and way of life.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. 1 Macc. 1:41-61; M[ax] Cary, A History of the Greek World from 323 to 146 B.C., p. 228; Harold W. Hoehner, "Between the Testaments," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 1:184.

Hellenization could not be entirely reversed. Pompey invaded Jerusalem with Roman armies in 63 B.C. By the first century A.D., Palestine was at least a bicultural (Jewish and Hellenistic) region, under the domination of a third (Roman) power.

A number of scholars have argued that Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek were languages commonly used by Jews in first-century Palestine,<sup>1</sup> that Jesus may have conversed regularly in Greek,<sup>2</sup> and that "the tradition about Jesus was expressed from the very first in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek."<sup>3</sup> The inscription on Jesus' cross was composed in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (John 19:20; cf. Luke 23:38, AV). Hellenism had a strong influence on Palestinian life not only in language, but also in political, military, and socioeconomic spheres.<sup>4</sup>

The question facing the present study is whether this Hellenistic milieu (both in Palestine and throughout the Greek and Roman church-planting field) influenced the Synoptic writers in their use of the Son of God title and provided in any sense its meaning. Such form critical scholars as Bultmann have argued strongly that the concept of Jesus' divine sonship inherent in most of the New Testament was heavily

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Robert H. Gundry, "The Language Milieu of First Century Palestine," *JBL* 83 (1964):404-8; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," *CBQ* 32 (1970):501-31; Philip E. Hughes, "The Languages Spoken by Jesus," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, pp. 127-43; Arthur D. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background*, HT, p. x.

<sup>2</sup>Hughes, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup>Gundry, p. 408.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols., 1:55-65.

influenced by Hellenistic ideas.<sup>1</sup> Bultmann says that although the early church may have seen Jesus as a messianic "son of God," the wide use of the title in the New Testament is due to Hellenistic influence and usage, indicating a miracle-worker who was physically descended from a god.<sup>2</sup> This new meaning was used by the apostle Paul and others to convey an understandable Christology to a Hellenistic audience. This new understanding was then read back into the earthly life of Christ by the Gospel writers.

Adolf Deissmann says that "among the 'heathen' the expression Son of God was a technical term."<sup>3</sup> It was familiar in the Greco-Roman world from the beginning of the first century A.D.<sup>4</sup> In fact in the early periods of Greek history, the poetry of Homer and others pictured the Olympian gods as a family dynasty. Zeus was the "father of men and gods."<sup>5</sup> Dionysus and Heracles were sons of Zeus by human mothers, though Dionysus had the rank of god from birth, whereas Heracles lived as a man and received apotheosis at death.<sup>6</sup> There is no link, however, between the "children of Zeus" of Greek religion and the early Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf K. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 1:128-32; cf. Joachim Bieneck, Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker, pp. 27-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1:130. E. G. Jay, however, says that such a transformation of the Christian gospel is "unlikely in the extreme" (Son of Man--Son of God, p. 45).

<sup>3</sup>G. Adolf Deissmann, Bible Studies, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 167. For an overview of the Hellenistic use of the title see James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, pp. 14-22.

<sup>5</sup>Homer Illiad 1. 544.

<sup>6</sup>TDNT, s.v. "υἱός," by Peter Wülfing von Martitz, 8:336.

witness to Jesus as the one Son of the one God.<sup>1</sup>

### The Divinization of Rulers

One of the more obvious instances of "divine sonship" is the application of "divine" titles to kings, emperors, and other rulers. In Hellenism this occurred particularly in Greece, Egypt, Syria, and Rome.

#### Greece

According to Plutarch, the Spartan general Lysander, after his victory over Athens in 404 B.C., became the first Greek to whom altars were erected and sacrifices were made "as to a god."<sup>2</sup> He may therefore be a forerunner of the later "divine" kings.<sup>3</sup>

Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) is one of the earliest rulers to have been given the title "son of God." Plutarch (ca. A.D. 100) records the story that Philip of Macedon ceased sleeping with Alexander's mother Olympias when a serpent was seen lying beside her, perhaps "because he shrank from her embraces in the conviction that she was the partner of a superior being."<sup>4</sup> He adds that "when Olympias sent Alexander forth upon his great expedition she told him, and him alone, the secret of his begetting and bade him have purposes worthy of his birth."<sup>5</sup> Thus it may be that Alexander grew to consider himself a "son

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Plutarch Life of Lysander 18. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Von Martitz, p. 338.

<sup>4</sup>Plutarch Life of Alexander 2. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 2. 3.

of god." According to Strabo<sup>1</sup> (ca. 10 B.C.), Alexander was not recognized as "son of Zeus" until he reached the oracle of Amon-Re (known in the Greek world as Zeus-Ammon) at the oasis of Siva (Siweh) in Libya (332 B.C.), where he arranged to have himself proclaimed the son of Amon, the supreme god of Egypt. Apparently he was greeted by the priests as Pharaoh, the divine offspring of Amon-Re.<sup>2</sup> If so, this would have been a continuation of the ancient Egyptian belief in the divine begetting of rulers. In 324 B.C., Alexander sent envoys to the cities of Greece demanding that he be recognized and honored as a god.

It is doubtful that many of Alexander's contemporaries actually accepted his claim to be a "son of God." The cities of Greece complied with Alexander's demand that he be recognized as a god,<sup>3</sup> but Demosthenes and other Athenians apparently refused to recognize Alexander's deity.<sup>4</sup> In 323 B.C., Alexander's Macedonian marshals never raised the question of his deification.<sup>5</sup> Lucian of Samosata (second century A.D.) refers to Alexander as the "son of a serpent," though he considers the tradition as mere legend.<sup>6</sup> In a fictitious dialogue between Alexander and Philip, Lucian has Alexander admit that he accepted divinization "because it was

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<sup>1</sup>Strabo Geography 17. 1. 43.

<sup>2</sup>F. E. Peters, The Harvest of Hellenism, p. 42. On Alexander the Great, see David L. Tiede, The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker, SBLDS, pp. 93-97.

<sup>3</sup>Cary, p. 367.

<sup>4</sup>Polybius Histories 12. 12b.

<sup>5</sup>Cary, p. 367.

<sup>6</sup>Lucian of Samosata Dialogues of the Dead 13. 2.



useful for my purposes."<sup>1</sup>

### Egypt

Plutarch speaks of the Egyptian god Osiris as a king who was born from the union of Cronus and Rhea (mother of the gods), who were also claimed as the parents of such gods as Zeus, Poseidon, and Hera.<sup>2</sup> He says that Osiris and his wife Isis were translated into gods in the same manner as were Heracles and Dionysus later.<sup>3</sup> Osiris even has a resurrection story to his credit. The worship of Isis and Osiris began to penetrate the Mediterranean world in the third century B.C., and became acceptable in Rome during the first century A.D. through the influence of Caligula and the Flavian emperors.

The Ptolmaic kings transferred the ancient Egyptian belief in the divine descent of rulers to themselves.<sup>4</sup> Ptolemy I (323-310 B.C.) stole Alexander's remains, divinized him, and by 284 B.C. a cult of Alexander was established at Alexandria. He adopted the title "Savior," and Ptolemy II instituted a cult to honor both his parents with the name "Savior Gods." It then "became the regular practice of the Ptolemies to raise their predecessors to the status of 'divi.'"<sup>5</sup> The first Greek cult for a living Ptolemy was established about 273 B.C. when Ptolemy II

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>2</sup>Plutarch Moralia Isis and Osiris 12 (355-56).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 27-35.

<sup>4</sup>According to Morenz the king as Pharaoh was a man but in holding the office he was considered God (Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, s.v. "Sohn Gottes," by S. Morenz, 6 [1962]:118).

<sup>5</sup>Cary, p. 368.

deified himself and his queen. Ptolemy III (246-221 B.C.) took the title "Benefactor," Ptolemy V (204-181 B.C.) the title "God Manifest," and Cleopatra (ca. 48-30 B.C.) was called "the newest goddess."<sup>1</sup> No one title seems to have been predominant, and the precise term "son of god" is lacking. The Ptolemies did, however, continue the royal style of old Egypt in calling themselves "son of Helios" and "child of Isis and Osiris."<sup>2</sup>

### Syria

The Seleucids also utilized honorific titles to enhance their prestige as rulers. Antiochus I (281-261 B.C.) took the title "Savior," Antiochus II (261-246 B.C.) "God," and Seleucus III (225-223 B.C.) "Savior." Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.) borrowed the title "God Manifest" from Ptolemy V, describing himself thus either as an incarnate deity or the manifestation of divine power.<sup>3</sup> He required his subjects to worship him as Olympian Zeus.<sup>4</sup>

### Rome

Plutarch describes an apotheosis of Romulus, the legendary

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<sup>1</sup>James R. Edwards, "The Son of God: Its Antecedents in Judaism and Hellenism and Its Use in the Earliest Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 55-56.

<sup>2</sup>Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. 1 Macc. 1:10; 2 Macc. 4:7; Josephus Antiquities 12. 234-235; Polybius Histories 26. 1; William Tarn, Hellenistic Civilisation, p. 30; Bo Reicke, The New Testament Era, pp. 43, 51. About 168/167 B.C., the Samaritans addressed Antiochus IV as βασιλεὺς Ἀντιόχῳ θεῶ ἐπιφανεῖ ("King Antiochus God Manifest"; cf. Josephus Antiquities 12. 258).

<sup>4</sup>2 Macc. 6:2. Coins provide examples of both designations.

founder of Rome: "he had been caught up into heaven, and was to be a benevolent god for them instead of a good king."<sup>1</sup> But he also says that the senators killed Romulus and cut up his body. However, he believed that the souls of good men "are translated out of men into heroes, out of heroes into demi-gods, out of demi-gods . . . elevated into gods admitted thus to the greatest and most blessed perfection."<sup>2</sup>

Scipio Africanus (236-138 B.C.) was a Roman general and statesman who defeated Hannibal in the Punic Wars and became princeps senatus. Livy (ca. 59 B.C.—A.D. 17) reports that Scipio's habit of visiting the temple each day "confirmed in some men the belief . . . that he was a man of divine race. And it revived the tale told of Alexander the Great and rivalling it as unfounded gossip, that his conception was due to an immense serpent."<sup>3</sup>

The divinization of the Roman emperors provides one of the better parallels for the New Testament period. The emperor-cult of Rome was politically Roman, but its roots were Oriental, having originated in the Egyptian belief in divine kingship.<sup>4</sup> In Rome it began with Caesar Augustus (63 B.C.—A.D. 14).<sup>5</sup> Suetonius records a birth legend which implies that Augustus was conceived through the presence of a serpent

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<sup>1</sup>Plutarch Life of Romulus 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>3</sup>Livy History of Rome 26. 19. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup>Donald Winslow, "Religion and the Early Roman Empire," in The Catacombs and the Colosseum, p. 247.

<sup>5</sup>There had, however, been attempts to deify Julius Caesar (ca. 100-44 B.C.) at least three times during his lifetime (Winslow, p. 247). Julius was "called a god because of his deeds," according to Diodorus of Sicily (Library of History 5. 21. 2).

while his mother Atia was in the temple of Apollo.<sup>1</sup> He was therefore regarded by some as the son of Apollo.

However, the cult specifically began in 42 B.C., when the Senate voted to include the deceased Julius among the gods of the state. In 29 B.C., a temple was dedicated to Julius. In the early empire, such deification was given only to a dead emperor. Augustus did not seek deification in Rome during his own reign nor did he there seek the title Divus, but he did accept the title Divi filius (that is, son of my divinized ancestor),<sup>2</sup> on the basis of his adoption in 45 B.C. The title Divi filius received translation in the Greek world as θεοῦ υἱός.<sup>3</sup>

The title is found a number of times in Greek inscriptions with reference to Augustus. An inscription at Tarsus calls him θεοῦ υἱόν σεβαστόν.<sup>4</sup> Deissmann quotes a similar inscription at Cos.<sup>5</sup> Moulton and Milligan also list a number of examples in the papyri, including one salutation which may come from the emperor himself: "Καῖσαρ θεοῦ υἱός σεβαστός."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Suetonius Life of Augustus 2. 94. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Winslow, p. 247. The divinization was determined by the Senate, so that Julius, Augustus, and Claudius were deified but Tiberius, Gaius, and Nero were not. The emperor-cult was not really a religion, but was designed to promote the unity of the empire and the loyalty of its citizens.

<sup>3</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Son of God," by Otto Michel, 3:635; Vincent Taylor, The Names of Jesus, p. 54; Deissmann, p. 167; von Martitz, p. 337.

<sup>4</sup>Deissman, p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>6</sup>James H. Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, pp. 287, 649.

The fact that Augustus called himself Divi filius has little or nothing to do with divine sonship, however. It meant merely that he was the "son of one who was transferred to a place among the gods," since his father by adoption was Julius Caesar, who was not taken to be a Divus.<sup>1</sup> The adjective θεῖος ("divine") was commonly used in the sense of "Imperial." The calendar inscription of Priene (ca. 9 B.C.) calls Augustus "the most divine Caesar." Later even Christian emperors were called "our most divine Lord."<sup>2</sup>

As emperor, however, Augustus encouraged the province to worship him as a god, following Hellenistic custom.<sup>3</sup> The city of Hypata called Augustus "God, Son of God, and Noble Benefactor."<sup>4</sup> An inscription from Pergamum calls Augustus "The Emperor, Caesar, Son of God, the God Augustus."<sup>5</sup> Apparently, as applied to Augustus, the terms "Son of God" and "God" were taken as virtually synonymous. When Augustus died in A.D. 14, the Senate declared him to be "immortal" and built shrines to him in Rome and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup>

Many of Augustus' successors were more daring in their approach to divinization. When Gaius Caligula was murdered, Dio Cassius sarcastically remarked that he "learned by actual experience that he was not a

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<sup>1</sup>Dalman, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup>G. Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, pp. 347-48. The Christian examples date from A.D. 558 to 633.

<sup>3</sup>Reicke, p. 95. In Rome, however, Augustus merely required the worship of his "genius."

<sup>4</sup>Edwards, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup>Deissmann, Light, p. 347.

<sup>6</sup>Dio Cassius Roman History 56. 46; cf. Herodian History 4. 2.

god."<sup>1</sup> Seneca referred to the deification of Claudius as "Pumpkinification."<sup>2</sup> Nero erected a Sun Temple with his own features on it, and he is called "Son of the greatest of the gods, Tiberius Claudius" in a votive inscription on a marble slab at Magnesia on the Maeander, before becoming emperor (ca. A.D. 50-54).<sup>3</sup> Sextus Pompeius called himself the son of Neptune; Domitian, the son of Minerva; and Caligula and Hadrian, the earthly manifestations of Zeus.<sup>4</sup>

Fitzmyer concludes, however, that the use of "son of God" by Roman emperors cannot be claimed as the sole origin of the title for Jesus in the New Testament.<sup>5</sup> And Fuller states that the Imperial-cultic use of the title was in no way constitutive for Christian use, though there may have been some influence on the popular level.<sup>6</sup> The fact is that there is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that its writers had any "official" use of the title in mind when they used it,

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<sup>1</sup>Dio Cassius Roman History 59. 30; cf. Suetonius Life of Caligula 22; Josephus Antiquities 19.11, where Caligula is reported to have implied that his daughter had two fathers--himself and Jupiter (Zeus)--and that he left undetermined which of the two was the greater. Tiberius rejected divinization and claimed to be purely mortal (cf. Tacitus Annals 4. 37-38), but Syrian coins bore the words Tiberios Kaisar Theou Sebastou Huios Sebastos (Philip H. Bligh, "A Note on Huios Theou in Mark 15:39," ET 80 [1968]:52; Ethelbert Stauffer, Christ and the Caesars, p.125).

<sup>2</sup>Seneca Divi Claudii apotheosis per saturam quae apocolocytosis vulgo dicitur.

<sup>3</sup>Winslow, p. 248; Deissmann, Light, p. 347.

<sup>4</sup>Dalman, p. 273.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, A Christological Catechism--New Testament Answers, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology, p. 88.

except perhaps in their efforts to distinguish the worship of Jesus and the true God from all other pretensions to deity (cf. Acts 12:22-24; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 19:16).

### The Mystery Religions

There were two types of mystery religions during the first century A.D.: (1) the older Greek mysteries, including the Eleusinian mysteries, the cult of Dionysus, and the Orphic mysteries; and (2) the Oriental mysteries, including Cybele and Attis (Phrygia), Adonis and Atargatis (Syria), Isis-Osiris and Serapis (Egypt), and the later Mithras cult. Almost all were originally fertility or vegetation rites. They later developed into religions teaching immortality after death.<sup>1</sup> Nash lists their basic elements as follows: (1) the symbolic significance of the annual vegetation cycle; (2) secret ceremonies, usually with an initiation rite and the impartation of a secret knowledge of the deity; (3) a myth in which the deity returns to life after death or defeats his enemies; (4) little concern for theology; and (5) mystical experiences designed to achieve union with the deity, redemption from everything earthly and temporal, and immortality.<sup>2</sup>

The Cybele and Attis cult is attested in Rome as early as 204 B.C., and Claudius reorganized it there during his reign (A.D. 41-54). The Isis cult was introduced into Greece about 333 B.C. The Adonis cult was present in both Greece and Italy before the Christian era.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Ronald H. Nash, Christianity and the Hellenistic World, pp. 122-24.

<sup>3</sup>Fuller, p. 92.

Some scholars have concluded that the mystery religions heavily influenced Christianity, with the following claims: (1) Early Christianity was just another Hellenistic mystery religion. (2) Christian beliefs were borrowed from similar beliefs in the mystery religions. (3) Baptism and the Lord's Supper derive from similar rituals in the mystery religions. (4) The Pauline doctrine of salvation parallels the belief in the mysteries of a savior-god who dies for those that he will eventually rescue, after which the god is restored to life.<sup>1</sup>

However, the concept of redemption in the mystery religions differs greatly from that of Christianity. In Christianity the believer is saved from sin, not fate or necessity. His salvation is forensic or judicial, and produces a moral change and a transformation of human character. But the mystery cults had no strong moral influence and no sinful guilt to be removed by justification.<sup>2</sup> The death and resurrection of Jesus are very different from the mysteries in which the deity descends into the lower world for the winter and comes out of it again in the spring.<sup>3</sup> Jesus died voluntarily for sin, for mankind, once for all, in triumph as an actual event in history. None of the mystery gods died for someone else or for sin. They were vegetation deities who in a mythical drama repeatedly died and were resuscitated, being overtaken by their fate in yearly defeat.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nash, pp. 116-17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-81.

<sup>3</sup>Fuller, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup>Nash, pp. 171-72.



The consensus of modern scholarly opinion appears to be that there was no significant mystery influence on the New Testament, and that the question is now a dead issue.<sup>1</sup> Adonis, Attis, and Osiris had no function as sons of God. "The Hellenistic mysteries did not know of sons of God who died and rose again, nor did the mystic himself become a child of the god of the mysteries."<sup>2</sup> The motifs of preexistence and sending were also absent. The deities supposedly began their existence when they were born on this earth.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the wave of Oriental mystery religions began particularly in the second century A.D. As Hengel notes, one must distinguish during the first century between the mystery cults and a widespread "mystery language." Hellenistic Jewish literature, such as Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon, was already using this mystery language. And evidence of mystery language in the New Testament does not indicate dependence on the mystery religions.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Gnostic Redeemer Myth

The Gnostic Redeemer myth begins with the heavenly preexistence of all human souls, which were sparks of a heavenly Primal Man. Before time, evil forces of darkness conquered this heavenly figure of light and tore him into pieces. The resultant particles of light were then used by the evil demons to create a world from the darkness. The demons guarded the particles of light carefully in order to prevent them from

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 119, 173.

<sup>2</sup>Hengel, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-28.

escaping and thereby causing their world to be destroyed. Each human soul, as a particle of light, has become imprisoned in an earthly body. But the good God sent to earth a Redeemer to impart a secret knowledge (γνῶσις) about their former state, which they had forgotten, and how they might return to it. The Redeemer then returned to the heavenly world of light in order to prepare the way for his followers after their death. Thus redeemed human souls can become liberated from their bondage to an evil, material world. The definitive "knowledge" of Gnosticism is to know of the heavenly origin of one's self and the way of redemption out of this world. Salvation is given to the Gnostic who has come to the knowledge of himself and his way back to his heavenly home, when the self separates from the body at death and is released into the heavenly world of light.<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann and others conclude that New Testament Christology is dependent on this myth. Jesus as the Primal Man descended and then ascended. Bultmann finds reflections on this myth in the Gospel of John and elsewhere (1 Cor. 2:8-10; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 4:8-10; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16). His source material includes the Hermetic writings (second or third century A.D.), Manichaean writings (third century A.D.), and Mandaean literature (second century A.D. or later).<sup>2</sup>

However, it has since been shown that the Gnostic Redeemer myth

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<sup>1</sup>Jes P. Asmussen, ed., Manichaean Literature, PHS, pp. 113-42; Mark Lidzbarski, ed., Ginza passim; Irenaeus Against Heresies 1. 1-21; cf. Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christos, pp. 245-81; Nash, pp. 218-19; Bultmann, 1:165-67.

<sup>2</sup>Bultmann, 1:166-78; cf. Edwin Yamauchi, Pre-Christian Gnosticism, pp. 117-42.

developed only under Christian influence.<sup>1</sup> There are no pre-Christian texts supporting the existence of the Gnostic myth.<sup>2</sup> It was a post-Christian (second century) development building on Christian beliefs, rather than the reverse.<sup>3</sup> Fuller calls the theory "no more than a scholarly reconstruction."<sup>4</sup> Early Jewish Gnosticism lacked a redeemer figure, implying that the redeemer was borrowed from Christianity. There is "no evidence for a pre-existent redeemer who becomes incarnate. Only in second-century 'Christian' gnosticism does the incarnate redeemer figure finally penetrate the gnostic tradition."<sup>5</sup> Fuller suggests that one should speak of a pre-Christian Gnostic "revelation" myth instead of a "redeemer myth."

As Hengel suggests,

There really should be an end to presenting Manichaean texts of the third century like the "Song of the Pearl" in the Acts of Thomas as evidence of supposedly pre-Christian gnosticism and dating it back to the first century BC. In reality there is no gnostic redeemer myth in the sources which can be demonstrated chronologically to be pre-Christian.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Kasper, Jesus the Christ, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>Yamauchi, pp. 163-69; Nash, p. 227. According to Helmbold all extant Gnostic Redeemer Hymns are from A.D. 140 or later, and as written sources could not have been used by New Testament writers (Andrew K. Helmbold, "Redeemer Hymns—Gnostic and Christian," in New Dimensions in New Testament Study, p. 73).

<sup>3</sup>Dunn, p. 99; cf. Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 2:70.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, p. 93. Bultmann's theory was dealt a severe blow by Colpe in 1961 (cf. Carsten Colpe, Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule passim; idem, "New Testament and Gnostic Christology," in Religions in Antiquity, pp. 227-43; Reginald H. Fuller, "Pre-Existence Christology: Can We Dispense with It?" Word & World 2 [1982]:30).

<sup>5</sup>Fuller, Foundations, pp. 95-97.

<sup>6</sup>Hengel, p. 33.

Even Simon Magus should not be regarded as a witness for pre-Christian Gnosticism. Gnosticism developed as a spiritual movement at the end of the first century at the earliest, and more fully in the second century. Christianity was a catalyst in its formation.<sup>1</sup> In fact it shows that the Hellenization of Christianity led to Docetism.<sup>2</sup> Thus John McDermott concludes that "the old history of religions hypothesis championed by R. Bultmann, that Jesus was a Jewish prophet divinized through Christianity's contact with Hellenistic mystery religions and Gnosticism, must finally be laid to rest."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Divine Man

The so-called "divine man" concept refers to the phenomenon that "a heroic figure of the past could be regarded as a supernatural being endowed with divine wisdom and the divine power to perform miracles."<sup>4</sup> The theory that the Son of God title in the New Testament is derived from this Hellenistic concept may have been first suggested by Wilhelm Bousset.<sup>5</sup> It was reemphasized and elaborated by Bultmann, who claims that the Hellenistic period had a whole series of "divine men" who claimed to be or were regarded as sons of a god.<sup>6</sup> Pannenberg is typical

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>John M. McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," Gr 62 (1981):277.

<sup>4</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?" Interp 35 (1981):243.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Bousset, pp. 168-70.

<sup>6</sup>Bultmann, 1:130. See also Ludwig Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ, 1:9-150, 2:3-120.

when he says, "Because of his charismatic activity, Jesus was understood in Hellenistic Jewish Christianity as a 'divine man,' in which the Old Testament designation for the charismatic figures of ancient Israel fused with the Hellenistic evaluation of extraordinary men as 'divine.'"<sup>1</sup>

The term θεῖος ἀνὴρ was capable of at least four meanings: (1) divine man, (2) inspired man, (3) a man related to God in some sense, and (4) an extraordinary man.<sup>2</sup> The phrase is not a technical term, and is found in neither the LXX or the New Testament. It is also rare in Hellenistic Jewish sources.<sup>3</sup> Richardson says boldly, "The world was full of 'divine men' . . . who claimed to be sons of God and who sometimes were actually worshipped as manifestations of deity."<sup>4</sup> However, even in Plato's time the term "divine men" was being used rather loosely, as when Plato called some foolish statesmen and some popular soothsayers "divine men."<sup>5</sup> Further in Hellenistic thought man had the potential of rising to a semidivine status. Man was seen as a being hovering between the divine and the animal. The "divine man" was exceptionally gifted and extraordinary, having a higher, revelational

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus—God and Man, p. 117. A brief survey of the history of "divine man" interpretation is given by Walter L. Liefeld, "The Hellenistic 'Divine Man' and the Figure of Jesus in the Gospels," JEITS 16 (1973):195-97. For an overview of the relation of Jesus to the "divine man" concept, see Tiede, pp. 241-92.

<sup>2</sup>Carl H. Holladay, Theios Anēr in Hellenistic Judaism. SBLDS, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 237-38.

<sup>4</sup>Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, p. 147.

<sup>5</sup>Plato Meno 99B-D; cf. Liefeld, p. 198.

wisdom and a divine power to do miracles. He was not a deity, but a mixture of the human and the divine,<sup>1</sup> a "superhuman."<sup>2</sup> In the New Testament the term is never applied to Jesus. A number of scholars, however, believe that a "divine man" Christology can be detected in the narrative traditions underlying the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> The various types of so-called Hellenistic "divine men" can be categorized in three major groups.

### Philosophers

Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher and mathematician of the sixth century B.C. Both Porphyry and Iamblichus (third century A.D.) record traditions that Pythagoras had a supernatural birth and that he was the son of Apollo.<sup>4</sup> Iamblichus also calls him a "child of God" (θεοῦ παῖς).<sup>5</sup> Pythagoras was reported to be a miracle-worker, revealer, predictor of the future, and interpreter of myths. Porphyry says that "about no one else have greater and more extraordinary things been believed."<sup>6</sup> Diodorus of Sicily relates that "almost the entire city turned to him, as to a god present among men."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Philo De Vita Mosis 1. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," in Jesus and the Historian, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>4</sup>Porphyry Vita Pythagorae 2, 10; Iamblichus Vita Pythagorae 5, 8, 25, 35; cf. Tiede, pp. 14-29; Bieler, 1:122-28.

<sup>5</sup>Iamblichus Vita Pythagorae 10.

<sup>6</sup>Porphyry Vita Pythagorae 29.

<sup>7</sup>Diodorus of Sicily Library of History 10. 3. 2; cf. 10. 9. 9.

Plutarch reports the legend that Plato was fathered by Apollo, "the God who begat him."<sup>1</sup> Origen later also relates the story that Plato was the son "of a visionary figure" who came "in the form of Apollo."<sup>2</sup> He explains that "these stories are really myths which have led people to invent such a tale about a man because they hold him as having superior power and wisdom" because "they thought that this was appropriate to persons who were too great to be human beings."<sup>3</sup>

### Heroes

Homer used θεῖος to describe in epic style various heroes, including Odysseus and Achilles.<sup>4</sup> When used of men, the term referred either to their pious attitude to religious commands or suprarational aspects of human action.<sup>5</sup> Men whose abilities were above normal are called θεῖος. Such men are not said to have worked miracles, however.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Plutarch Quaestiones Convivales 8. 2; cf Diogenes Laertius Lives of the Philosophers 3. 2. However, Plato is never called the "son of Apollo."

<sup>2</sup>Origen Contra Celsum 6. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1. 37. Cf. Tiede, pp. 30-42; Bieler, 1:14-15. Since the Greeks considered poetry a gift of the gods, the poets spoke often of a divine inspiration, the help of the Muses, which aided them in their artistic endeavor (cf. Homer Iliad 2. 484-91; Plato Phaedrus; Aristotle Rhetoric 1408B; Pindar Pythia 7b). But this is not divine sonship, nor is there any reference to the poets as "divine men"; instead the poets as men are aided in accomplishing what they see as a divine task (cf. Edwards, p. 64).

<sup>4</sup>Homer Iliad 2. 335; 19. 297; Odyssey 4. 17; cf. Bieler, 1:10.

<sup>5</sup>E.g., Plato Respublica 2. 383c; Meno 99d; Xenophon Oeconomicus 21. 5; von Martitz, p. 338.

<sup>6</sup>Von Martitz, p. 338.

Pindar (fifth century B.C.) wrote of "the god-like [θεῖος] son" (Antilochous, son of Nestor) who "bought with his own life the rescue of his father."<sup>1</sup> Aeschylus (fifth century B.C.) spoke of one who with tears "utters his praise over the hero's [King Agamemnon's] grave," describing the hero as "divine."<sup>2</sup> Plato speaks of "a wise and divine man"<sup>3</sup> and says,

And may we, Meno, rightly call those men divine who, having no understanding, yet succeed in many a great deed and word? . . . Then we shall be right in calling those divine of whom we spoke just now as soothsayers and prophets and all of the poetic turn; and especially we can say of the statesmen that they are divine and enraptured, as being inspired and possessed of God when they succeed in speaking many great things, while knowing nought of what they say. . . . And the women too, I presume, Meno, call good men divine; and the Spartans, when they eulogize a good man, say—"He is a divine man."<sup>4</sup>

Later in the fourth century B.C., Aristotle wrote:

As the opposite of Bestiality it will be most suitable to speak of Superhuman Virtue, or goodness on a heroic or divine scale. . . . Hence if, as men say, surpassing virtue changes men into gods, the disposition opposed to Bestiality will clearly be some quality more than human . . . divine goodness is something more exalted than Virtue. . . . And inasmuch as it is rare for a man to be divine, in the sense in which that word is commonly used by the Lacedaemonians as a term of extreme admiration—"Yon man's divine," they say.<sup>5</sup>

The legend of Heracles (Hercules) was a favorite of classical Greek and Latin writers. His father was Zeus, and he spent his life protecting himself from the anger of Zeus' wife, Hera. The common

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<sup>1</sup>Pindar Pythian Odes 6. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Aeschylus Agamemnon 1548.

<sup>3</sup>Plato Republica 331e.

<sup>4</sup>Idem Meno 99d.

<sup>5</sup>Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 7. 1. 1-3.



opinion is that he was promoted to deity after his death.<sup>1</sup> Plutarch mentions that Heracles was translated for his virtues into a god.<sup>2</sup> Epictetus (first and second centuries A.D.), a Greek Stoic philosopher, says that Heracles "was believed to be a son of God, and was."<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere he calls Heracles God's "own son."<sup>4</sup> But he also notes that "Zeus is the father of men, for he [Heracles] always thought of him as his own father, and called him so."<sup>5</sup> Heracles, in his role as the champion of justice and opponent of wickedness, became, along with Alexander the Great, a prototype of the Hellenistic ruler-cult. But it is especially noteworthy that Epictetus uses the Heracles legend to teach that all (good) men are sons of Zeus.<sup>6</sup>

Plutarch records that when the Spartan general Cleomenes committed suicide (219 B.C.), there was an omen at the time of his death that gave rise to a popular rumor that he was a hero and a "child of the gods."<sup>7</sup> Bultmann and William Manson compare this to Mark 15:39.<sup>8</sup>

With reference to Hellenistic Judaism, the Letter of Aristeas

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<sup>1</sup>Seneca Hercules Furens 882-91; Hercules Oetaeus 1938-43.

<sup>2</sup>Plutarch Moralia Isis and Osiris 27.

<sup>3</sup>Epictetus Dissertationes 2. 16. 44.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3. 26. 31-32.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3. 24. 15-16.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 2. 16. 44; 3. 24. 16; 3. 26. 31. On Heracles, see Tiede, pp. 71-100. For more examples of Greek heroes and rulers who were said to have been sent into the world by gods, see Hengel, pp. 36-40.

<sup>7</sup>Plutarch Life of Cleomenes 39.

<sup>8</sup>Rudolf K. Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 274 note; William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 148.

(140) calls Old Testament heroes "men of God," which Fuller says is equivalent to "divine men" (but this is actually an Old Testament term applied to prophets and others who obeyed God). Several times Josephus uses the adjective θεῦτος for Moses and the prophets: (1) Moses is a "divine man," as seen in his design of the Tabernacle and his giving of the Law; (2) Solomon's wisdom showed him to have a "divine mind" and (3) Isaiah was "a divine and wonderful man in speaking truth."<sup>1</sup> He also uses the term to refer to the immortality or "divinity" of each human soul: "while souls are tied down to a mortal body, they are partakers of its miseries. . . . the union of what is divine to what is mortal is disagreeable."<sup>2</sup> Philo avoids the term θεῦτος in his Life of Moses, preferring to use instead θεσπέσιος ἄνθρωπος, meaning a "divinely-sounding man" or a "supra-human man,"<sup>3</sup> and thus indicating God's inspiration.

What is most important is that the term "son of God" is never used for the "divine man" concept in Hellenistic Judaism.<sup>4</sup> In the Old Testament there is clearly no participation by man in the divine, but only complete subordination to God. The special abilities of the "men of God" are due to the divine Spirit working within them. Hahn admits that the constitutive element of the "divine man" concept—his divinity or deification—is unthinkable in the Old Testament.<sup>5</sup> Yet he sees the

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<sup>1</sup>Josephus Antiquities 3. 180; 8. 34; 10. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Idem Jewish War 7. 344; cf. Tiede, pp. 207-40.

<sup>3</sup>IS, 9th ed., s.v. "θεσπέσιος," p. 795.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 69; cf. Tiede, pp. 101-37; Bieler, 1:18-19, 2:3-36.

<sup>5</sup>Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, p. 289.

beginning of a Jewish use of the idea in Josephus and especially in Philo, who, he says, implies a transformation of human nature into divine with respect to such men as Abraham and Moses.<sup>1</sup> Hahn claims that Hellenistic Judaism adopted and reformed the "divine man" concept, but when he concludes that even there the mighty works of Old Testament "men of God" were considered to have been accomplished only by the Spirit given to them by God,<sup>2</sup> he seems simply to be reiterating the Old Testament concept.<sup>3</sup> Holladay concludes that among Jews, Hellenization actually widened the gap between man and God, as illustrated by Philo's dualism between Creator and creature.<sup>4</sup>

John Pobee goes so far as to say that the title "son of God" was used in Hellenism "of every unusual human existence." He therefore interprets the centurion's statement in Mark 15:39 as his recognition that Jesus was a hero or demigod, and, since Jesus was dying on a cross at the time, "the centurion's recognition of Jesus as a hero implies that Jesus is a martyr." Thus the Son of God title for the Roman centurion was simply his statement of Jesus' heroic martyrdom, based on such unusual events as the darkness which had covered the land.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 298.

<sup>3</sup>Vielhauer concludes that Hahn's attempt to combine the messianic and divine man concepts is unsuccessful (Philipp Vielhauer, "Zur Frage der christologischen Hoheitstitel," ThLZ 90 [1965]:585).

<sup>4</sup>Holladay, p. 235.

<sup>5</sup>John Pobee, "The Cry of the Centurion--a Cry of Defeat," in The Trial of Jesus, p. 100.

Obviously Pöbe has wildly exaggerated the Hellenistic evidence.<sup>1</sup>

According to Origen, Celsus is said to have claimed that "no God or son of a God either came or will come down."<sup>2</sup> Origen accepts this statement as disproof of the Greek belief in the existence of gods on earth who had supposedly descended from heaven (he mentions Aesculapius and the Pythian Apollo specifically). Justin Martyr claims that similarities between the birth of Christ and the birth of such figures as Perseus, Dionysus, and Heracles is due to imitation on the part of the pagan author of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Origen disputes Celsus' references to men who claimed, "I am God, or I am the Son of God, or I am the Divine Spirit."<sup>4</sup> In these passages both the Christian writers and their opponents show a realization of the mythological nature of the pagan stories, while Origen and Justin argue strongly for the uniqueness and facticity of Christ's sonship.

#### Miracle-workers

A number of scholars conclude that "there is much which would identify Jesus as a more or less conventional Hellenistic wonder-

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. also Morenz, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Origen Contra Celsum 5. 2; cf. 4. 2-23; cf. Bieler, 2:36-39.

<sup>3</sup>Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho 67-70; cf. Apology 1. 22. See J. Gresham Machen, The Virgin Birth of Christ, pp. 324-79, for a discussion of the early Christian response to stories of pagan "sons of god" and "virgin births" resulting from the union of gods with mortal women.

<sup>4</sup>Origen Contra Celsum 7. 9. The mention of the Christian triad of God, Son and Spirit shows that Celsus is giving a parody of Christian missionaries, rather than referring to actual claims of divine sonship by pagans (cf. Hengel, p. 32).

worker."<sup>1</sup> Achtemeier admits, however, that this statement must be qualified by noting that magical practices and incantations are absent from the reports of Jesus' miracles, and that instead Jesus' miracles serve His preaching and teaching.<sup>2</sup>

Apollonius of Tyana was a first-century A.D. resident of Asia Minor. During the third century, Philostratus of Athens was commissioned to write the Life of Apollonius, in which he claims that Apollonius, as a sage and miracle-worker, was recognized as a "divine man."<sup>3</sup> He reports that Apollonius' mother was told by what appeared to be an Egyptian demon that her child would be Proteus, "the Egyptian God."<sup>4</sup> The people called Apollonius a child of Zeus.<sup>5</sup> Philostratus calls him a sage and a prophet, but not a son of Zeus. He reports that Apollonius had superhuman abilities, knowing languages without learning them, predicting the future, and remembering former incarnations. Apollonius is also presented as a worker of miracles, which included

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<sup>1</sup>Paul J. Achtemeier, "Gospel Miracle Tradition and the Divine Man," Interp 26 (1972):185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. The Hellenistic world was convinced that men could be endowed with divine powers, Achtemeier says, and ultimately could become gods (pp. 186-87). He calls such "divine men." He claims that the divine man was anyone who excelled in some desirable capacity. The ability to work miracles became the basic qualification. Miracles, he says, were expected even from the traveling philosophers (p. 187). Achtemeier says that "any cultic deity worth his salt could also boast a string of miracles" (p. 187, n. 64). Clearly Achtemeier seriously exaggerates the scope and application of the "divine man" category in the Hellenistic world. Cf. also Tiede, pp. 313-16.

<sup>3</sup>Philostratus Life of Apollonius 1. 2, 21; 3. 28; 5. 36; 8. 15; cf. also Bieler, 1:7, 28.

<sup>4</sup>Philostratus Life of Apollonius 1. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1. 6.

healings and raising a young girl who seemed to be dead.<sup>1</sup> In Egypt and India he was regarded as godlike.<sup>2</sup> Some even called him a "god," but he responded that every good man can be called a "god."<sup>3</sup> It may be, therefore, that for Apollonius the title "divine" is an ethical designation, deriving from attributes of goodness. At the end of his life he was translated to heaven and later made appearances on earth to prove his immortality.<sup>4</sup> However, Philostratus never calls Apollonius a "son of God." He merely says that some believed him to be a "son of Zeus," perhaps even an incarnation of Proteus, and he calls him "divine" in the Greek sense that the soul of man comes from God and that virtue leads to godhood. Apollonius' goodness shows him to be a "divine man with greater access to God than other men have."<sup>5</sup>

Simon Magus also claimed to have the power of God, and is among the group of men mentioned by Celsus as claiming, "I am God, or I am the Son of God, or I am the Divine Spirit."<sup>6</sup> He was called a magician by Luke (Acts 8:9-11) and the father of Gnosticism by later church writers. It is clear, however, that these "miracle-workers" did not influence the meaning of the Son of God title in the New Testament, and in fact that the term "divine man" is an equivalent of neither "miracle-worker" nor

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3. 39; 4. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8. 5, 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 8. 30-31.

<sup>5</sup>Edwards, p. 69; cf. Gillis P. Wetter, Der Sohn Gottes, pp. 14-15.

<sup>6</sup>Origen Contra Celsum 7. 9; cf. also Bieler, 1:134-38.

"Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusion

The motifs of the so-called "divine man" include some or all of the following: a miraculous birth, divine parentage, extraordinary wisdom, ability to perform great deeds or miracles (usually without divine aid), resurrection or translation to immortality. The Hellenistic view of the relationship between men and gods tended to make men gods and gods men.<sup>2</sup> But it is clear that the designation "divine man" was not a fixed term in the Hellenistic world.<sup>3</sup> Diodorus of Sicily writes that "concerning earthly gods many and varied reports are received from historians and mythologists."<sup>4</sup>

It appears that the "divine men" of Hellenism were considered to be part god and part man, not fully god and fully man. Zeus was known as the father of men and gods.<sup>5</sup> Each person possessed a divine soul, which made all men to some extent divine.<sup>6</sup> For the Greeks, a soul was a divine entity imprisoned within a material body. In addition, the Stoics held that all men are God's offspring.<sup>7</sup> In the apotheosis of the

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, pp. 236-37. See also Wetter, pp. 4-17, 64-73.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 251; Euripides Heracles Furens 339-49.

<sup>3</sup>Tiede, p. 289; von Martitz, pp. 338-39. Von Martitz notes that θεῖος is mostly predicative; it is not a technical term. Cf. also Kingsbury, p. 248.

<sup>4</sup>Diodorus of Sicily Library of History 6. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Homer Iliad 1. 544; Odyssey 1. 28.

<sup>6</sup>Bultmann, Theology, 1:130; Hengel, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Cleanthes Hymn to Zeus; Aratus Phaenomena 5; cf. Cicero De

"divine man," the mortal attained to immortality because of his virtue. As a person, he was not preexistent, and his divine "sonship" did not carry with it divine status.<sup>1</sup> But this sense of divine sonship is obviously very general and indefinite.

In Hellenistic literature, the adjective θεῖος is used frequently, but the term θεῖος ἀνὴρ is quite rare. The concept is vague, and scholars who use it have made opposing and contradictory statements about it.<sup>2</sup> Marshall is quite correct when he concludes that "the use of theios with reference to men endowed with superhuman qualities appears to have no essential relationship to the concept of Son of God."<sup>3</sup> Fuller admits that "most of the evidence adduced for the

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Legibus 1. 7. 23; idem De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum 3. 19. 64; Epictetus Dissertationes 1. 3. 2; 1. 13. 3; 3. 22. 81. Epictetus wrote, "We all come directly from God and God is the father of gods and men" (1. 3. 1). The Stoics who taught that all men are by nature children of Zeus no longer needed a "son of God" as mediator and redeemer (cf. Hengel, p. 24).

<sup>1</sup>As noted above, even Heracles had to be translated into godhood or made "divine."

<sup>2</sup>Otto Betz, "The Concept of the So-called 'Divine Man' in Mark's Christology," in Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 232-33. Marshall appears to overstate the case when he says that the phrase "divine man" is not found in the sources, but rather is a creation of modern scholarship since θεῖος is used predicatively but not as an attribute (I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology, p. 114).

<sup>3</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Son of God," by I. Howard Marshall, 3:636. Oscar Cullmann accepts a common but unwarranted generalization when he says, "Anyone believed to possess some kind of divine power was called 'son of God' by others, or gave himself the title. All miracle workers were 'sons of God'" or "divine men" (The Christology of the New Testament, p. 272). He says that "the title was quite common." He grossly exaggerates when he states, "In the New Testament period one could meet everywhere men who called themselves 'sons of God' because of their peculiar vocation or miraculous powers." But he also notes that the New Testament use of the title has a special connotation of uniqueness. The Hellenistic concept "lacks Jesus' extremely intense consciousness of



Hellenistic concept of the divine man by the History of Religions school is later than the NT."<sup>1</sup> And "son of God" was not a title by which the "divine man" was known.<sup>2</sup>

Holladay concludes that "divine man" is not suitable as a Christological expression, because it is too imprecise and fluid. He notes that Hellenistic Jews did not ascribe divinity to human beings in their propaganda to pagans, and it is therefore highly unlikely that Jesus' Jewish apostles would have done so with reference to Jesus.<sup>3</sup> If they presented Jesus as divine, it is not because of Hellenistic influence. In fact Hellenization made it "more difficult for Jews to conceive of a divine man."<sup>4</sup> Thus to account for miracle traditions in

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complete, unique unity of will with the one God in executing the divine linear plan of salvation."

<sup>1</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 98. He adds, however, that pre-Christian Jewish polemics against the Hellenistic divine man concept show that the concept was well established before the New Testament (cf. the Letter of Aristeas, ca. 100 B.C.). Fuller believes that Mark and John portray Jesus as a modified "divine man" in order to appeal to the Gentile understanding of Jesus Christ as the power and revelatory presence of God Himself (pp. 228-29).

<sup>2</sup>Kingsbury, p. 248. He notes that it is "highly unlikely that the term theios anēr ever achieved the status of a fixed concept in the ancient world." It is a rare term in ancient Greek literature, and it is not associated firmly with extraordinary persons to whom divinity is ascribed. Nor is it clearly associated with divine "sonship." Koester also admits, "It is not possible to prove that Son of God was a common designation for the miracle worker in the Hellenistic and Roman world (Helmut Koester, "The Structure and Criteria of Early Christian Beliefs," in Trajectories through Early Christianity, p. 217, n. 22). Nevertheless he believes that the miracles of Jesus became part of a "divine man" Christology in the early church (p. 217).

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, p. 241.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

the Gospels on the basis of a Hellenistic setting is "highly dubious."<sup>1</sup>

There are other reasons for doubt as well. Nowhere do the Gospels, either in proposed sources or in the extant texts, contain the term "divine man."<sup>2</sup> Nock notes that the existence of a "divine man" concept in Hellenism "does not explain the recognition of Jesus as Son of God and as Lord by the community at Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup> And in Matthew 4, when Satan addresses Jesus, "If you are the Son of God," Jesus answers with citations from Deuteronomy which imply a thorough rejection of the "divine man" idea.<sup>4</sup> In Mark, "Jesus as 'Son of God' is radically different from all popular miracle-workers and theioi andres because his sonship means the absolute obedience of a son in the execution of a divine commission."<sup>5</sup> Further, in Acts, as the sermons become more Hellenistic in context, the emphasis on Jesus' miracles decreases.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>2</sup>Liefeld, p. 205. He appears to conclude that the Gospels are not characterized by "divine man" motifs, but implies that some narrative elements were chosen to show "the superiority of Jesus over any rival claimants to deity" (p. 204).

<sup>3</sup>Nock, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 181, n. 93.

<sup>5</sup>William L. Lane, "Theios Anēr Christology and the Gospel of Mark," in New Dimensions in New Testament Study, p. 160, n. 36. He concludes that it is not proper to speak of "the Hellenistic concept of the Divine Man," since there was no unified point of view in Hellenism concerning such charismatic figures (p. 146). Lane says, however, that in Mark 15:39 it is possible that the Roman centurion meant that Jesus was a divine man or deified hero when he called Jesus "son of God." He states that the title probably reflects Jesus' moral courage in the face of death, rather than His miracles or the signs accompanying the crucifixion (p. 160).

<sup>6</sup>Holladay, p. 239. Cf. Acts 2:22; 10:38 with Acts 17.

### Conclusion

Vincent Taylor concludes that neither emperor-worship nor the mystery religions nor the Hellenistic "divine man" concept nor Gnosticism can provide a basis for understanding the New Testament Son of God title.<sup>1</sup> The title "son of God" was not common in Hellenism,<sup>2</sup> and is not synonymous with "divine man." It was not a common term for rulers, philosophers, heroes, or miracle-workers. The Latin term for the divinized emperor, Divi filius, is not the same as filius Dei (son of God). In addition  $\mu\alpha\tilde{\iota}\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  and  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  are not interchangeable.<sup>3</sup> Those who conclude that the New Testament title "Son of God" is dependent on Hellenistic influence are dealing with the "concept" of divine sonship rather than with a definite title.

Von Martitz concludes that a human as a son of God occurs in Hellenism only with reference to the following: (1) doctors, where it simply denotes membership in the profession by relating them to the god of medicine, Aesculapius; (2) the ruler cult, as derived from Egyptian usage; (3) the Gnostics who were attacked by Christian apologists; and (4) certain philosophers in Neo-Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic circles.

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, pp. 59-60. For an overview of pagan parallels, see Otto Pfliegerer, The Early Christian Conception of Christ, pp. 29-48. For a critique of explaining New Testament data on the basis of Hellenistic parallels, see Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," JBL 81 (1962):1-13; R. T. France, "The Worship of Jesus," in Christ the Lord, pp. 19-23.

<sup>2</sup>Nock, p. 45. The designation "son of God" is relatively rare in the Hellenistic world, and is used as a title only as a translation of Divi filius (son of the divinized) and found on Greek inscriptions as  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon \nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$ . Hengel also draws a fundamental distinction between  $\mu\alpha\tilde{\iota}\delta\epsilon\varsigma \Delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  as a title, and says that  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  was not a widespread title in Eastern religion (p. 30).

<sup>3</sup>Von Martitz, pp. 336-40.

He adds that divine sonship is only accidentally associated with the θεῖος description.<sup>1</sup>

As Richardson suggests,

It is exceedingly unlikely that any Christians, even Hellenistic ones, would have begun to call Jesus "the Son of God" because they had mistaken him for one of the Greek "sons of God" of the type of Simon Magus or Elymas, still less of the type of Caligula or Herod Agrippa (cf. Acts 12:22), or of the wandering Stoic philosophers. . . . But it may well be that the title "Son of God" was widely employed in the Gentile churches because it was intelligible to a Gentile congregation.<sup>2</sup>

But it is a false comparison to say that when early Christians called Jesus the "Son of God," they meant the same thing as when non-Christians addressed Caesar as Divi filius or "son of god," or as when pagans spoke of certain ancient philosophers or legendary figures as "sons" of Zeus or Apollo.

Marshall concludes that the possibility of Hellenistic derivation for the use of "Son" in the Gospels "can be once and for all ruled out," in view of the Palestinian Jewish character of many of its occurrences.<sup>3</sup> He notes that the "history of religions" explanation of the development of Christology in terms of Hellenization was "a complete misrepresentation of what actually happened." It was primarily the Old Testament and Jewish environment of the early Christians which gave them the concepts and vocabulary which they used to develop their under-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 340. Goppelt says that neither the "divine men" nor the deities of the mystery religions were in essence "sons of God," though they were sometimes designated as such (2:70).

<sup>2</sup>Richardson, pp. 147-48.

<sup>3</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?--A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," NIS 15 (1968):335.

standing of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Hellenistic Christians thought about divine sonship in terms of the God of the Old Testament, rather than still in terms of Hellenistic concepts of deity (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9-10). The word θεῖος is never applied to Jesus in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> For Hellenistic Christians, "the title 'Son of God' placed Jesus in a special relationship to the God of the Old Testament."<sup>3</sup> The use of the title in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 shows that it was already traditional by the time of Paul's travels, so that its origin must lie either with Jesus or the Palestinian church rather than with the Hellenistic church.<sup>4</sup>

When one views the evidence for the possible influence of the Old Testament, ancient Judaism, and Hellenism on the meaning of the Son of God title in the Synoptic Gospels, one must therefore conclude that none is sufficient to provide the key to a reliable definition. The Old Testament provides the linguistic groundwork for the development of a messianic Son of God concept, but the actual title, including its use in intertestamental Judaism, is lacking. Later Judaism individualizes the Jewish "son of God" concept and makes certain connections between the appropriate messianic passages, but again the title is uncertain or

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<sup>1</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Son of God," by I. Howard Marshall, 3:636. Dunn concludes that there is no good evidence that the pre-Christian ancient Near East seriously held the idea of a god or son of god descending from heaven to become a human being for the purpose of bringing salvation to the world (p. 22).

<sup>2</sup>It occurs three times in the New Testament (Acts 17:29; 2 Pet. 1:3-4), each time without a Christological connection.

<sup>3</sup>Goppelt, 2:71.

<sup>4</sup>Taylor, p. 59.

lacking. The Hellenistic concept of divine sonship bears little clear resemblance to New Testament Christology.

The remaining task of the present study, therefore, is to examine the evidence of the Synoptic Gospels to determine the origin of the title in the sayings of Jesus Himself and the precise meaning with which He infused it. For if the New Testament use of the title arose first with Jesus and His apostles, evidence of this fact and of its correct definition will surely be obtainable.

PART III

THE TITLE "SON OF GOD" IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

## CHAPTER VI

### THE USE OF THE TITLE "SON OF GOD" BY JESUS

Bultmann has said, "The highest that can be said of man, the final word, is that he is a 'son of God.'"<sup>1</sup> Hengel notes that "more than any other title in the New Testament, the title Son of God connects the figure of Jesus with God."<sup>2</sup>

Many critics have claimed that Jesus never claimed this title for Himself. Depending heavily on radical German scholarship, Pannenberg declares, "Today it must be taken as all but certain that the pre-Easter Jesus neither designated himself as Messiah (or Son of God) nor accepted such a confession to him from others." Neither Pannenberg nor Schillebeeckx believe that Jesus ever applied the title "the Son" to Himself (though He did speak of God as His Father).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, p. 63. According to Schedl, in a general sense the term "Son of God" expresses at least a special relationship to God (Claus Schedl, Zur Christologie der Evangelien, p. 185).

<sup>3</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus—God and Man, p. 327; Edward Schillebeeckx, Jesus, p. 258. Pannenberg says that Jesus' claim to act with the authority of God does not mean that He understood Himself either as Messiah or Son of God; instead His consciousness of unity with God expressed itself indirectly—in His activity (p. 328). Cf. E. Frank Tupper, "The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg," RExp 71 (1974):64. Likewise Schweizer concludes that there is "not a single genuine saying of Jesus" in which He refers to Himself as "the Son of God" (Eduard Schweizer, Jesus, p. 16); Thompson agrees (William M. Thompson, Jesus, Lord and Savior, p. 72). For overviews of the debate, see Petr Pokorný,



Goppelt says that "only in some preliminary stages was the designation 'Son of God' applied to Jesus during his earthly ministry." He was conscious of a unique bond to the Old Testament God, but He preferred to express this truth by speaking of a Father-Son relationship rather than by applying the title Son of God to Himself.<sup>1</sup> And according to Fuller "Jesus did not 'claim' to be the Son of God, or directly call himself such, but he did know that he stood in a unique relationship of Sonship to God."<sup>2</sup>

Raymond Brown argues that the Synoptic Gospels do not contain certain proof that Jesus claimed a unique Sonship that others could not share.<sup>3</sup> Klausner thinks that Jesus certainly did not regard Himself as Son of God in the Trinitarian sense, because it is "quite inconceivable" that a Jew could believe such a thing at the time of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Marxsen carries the skepticism even further by concluding that Jesus did not apply any of the traditional Christological titles (Son of God, Son of

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Der Gottessohn, TS, pp. 27-40; C. K. Barrett, Jesus and the Gospel Tradition, pp. 24-28; Joachim Bieneck, Sohn Gottes als Christus-bezeichnung der Synoptiker, ATANT, pp. 35-44; Ernest de Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, ICC, pp. 410-14; Reginald H. Fuller, The New Testament in Current Study, pp. 70-91; E. G. Jay, Son of Man—Son of God, pp. 44-50; Alan Richardson, An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, pp. 149-51; Vincent Taylor, The Names of Jesus, pp. 55-65.

<sup>1</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, 1:202; for an overview, cf. 1:199-205; 2:222-24.

<sup>2</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond Brown, Jesus, God and Man, p. 91; cf. also pp. 86-93. Fuller also says that "there is no unimpeachable evidence that Jesus actually spoke of himself as the 'Son' in any unique sense" (Reginald H. Fuller and Pheme Perkins, Who Is This Christ?, p. 45).

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 377.

Man, or Messiah) to Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Such negative conclusions, however, are unwarranted. The divine sonship of Jesus is propounded at the beginning of all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 2:15; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:32, 35).<sup>2</sup> And Taylor has shown that the title Son of God is "rooted in the primitive tradition."<sup>3</sup>

Even those who accept the general authenticity of Synoptic passages in which Jesus refers to Himself as God's Son disagree as to the meaning of such a self-designation. After discussing critical opinions concerning such passages as Matthew 11:27 and Mark 13:32, Aulén says that the meaning of such titles as "Son of God" is uncertain. He concludes that Jesus presented Himself as "the enigmatic representative of the kingdom of God," who "acted with total sovereignty on behalf of God."<sup>4</sup> Goulder states that Jesus saw His sonship as comprising obedience and suffering.<sup>5</sup> According to De Kuiper and Newman at least three different interpretations of Jesus' sonship are found in the New Testament itself: (1) that He was adopted as God's Son at His baptism

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<sup>1</sup>Willi Marxsen, The Beginnings of Christology, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>ZPEB, s.v. "Son of God," by R. Alan Cole, 5 (1976):481.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, The Names of Jesus, p. 55; cf. idem, The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching, pp. 146-51; William Barclay, Jesus As They Saw Him, pp. 48-67; Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, pp. 303-12; I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology, pp. 114-17; Geerhardus Vos, The Self-Disclosure of Jesus, pp. 140-95; James M. Vosté, "The Title 'Son of God' in the Synoptic Gospels," AEcR 121 (1949):18-33; Benjamin Warfield, The Lord of Glory, pp. 137-40.

<sup>4</sup>Gustaf Aulén, Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research, p. 118. On the apocalyptic nature of Jesus' sonship, see W. R. G. Loader, "The Apocalyptic Model of Sonship: Its Origin and Development in New Testament Tradition," JBL 97 (1978):525-54.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Goulder, "Incarnation or Eschatology?" in Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued, p. 143.

(Mark 1:11); (2) that He became God's Son through conception by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:32, 35); and (3) that He is eternally the Son of God, as announced by Jesus from the beginning (John 1:34, 49-50). They claim that "Jesus himself certainly did not call upon the people of his day to believe in him as the Son of God—his message was the proclamation of God's Rule, not of himself as the Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

Though Vermes concludes that it is impossible to prove that Jesus defined Himself as the Son of God,<sup>2</sup> it will be shown in the following pages that (1) Jesus did refer to God as uniquely His Father and to Himself as God's unique Son, and that (2) Jesus meant this Father-Son relationship to be understood as an essential equality with God. Bauckham is correct when he notes that "if there were no evidence that Jesus understood his relation to God to be in any way distinctive it would be difficult to maintain that he was in fact uniquely related to God."<sup>3</sup> This distinctive relationship, however, is exactly what Jesus claimed.

#### The Authenticity of Jesus' Sayings

Much of modern criticism accepts Bultmann's conclusion that "the synoptic passages in which Jesus is called Son of God are mostly either

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<sup>1</sup>Arie de Kuiper and Barclay M. Newman, Jr., "Jesus, Son of God—A Translation Problem," BiTr 28 (1977):433-34. Walter Kasper says that three stages of development of the title can be seen in the New Testament: (1) the confession of Jesus as Son of God after His resurrection (Rom. 1:4); (2) the belief that Jesus was adopted as God's Son at His baptism (Mark 1:11); and (3) the substantiation of Jesus' divine sonship through the story of His miraculous conception by the Spirit (Luke 1:35) (Jesus the Christ, pp. 164-65; cf. pp. 109-10).

<sup>2</sup>Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology," SJTh 31 (1978):245.

secondary and of Hellenistic-Christian origin, or else were formulated by the respective evangelist."<sup>1</sup> There is growing agreement, however, that "we can know more of the historical Jesus than the form critics, especially R. Bultmann, had allowed."<sup>2</sup>

As applied to the sayings of Jesus, the term "authentic" has a number of distinct meanings: (1) authoritative (Jesus' sayings are recognized as having a special authority); (2) credible (certain sayings agree with what is known of the life and teaching of Jesus and are therefore what Jesus would have said); and (3) genuine (the earthly Jesus actually said them).<sup>3</sup> The term "authentic" is thus somewhat ambiguous in Gospel studies. Some scholars use it to refer to material that is historically significant or may represent Jesus' thought in some form. In the present study, however, it will be used in its more common reference to words that Jesus actually spoke (though these sayings may be condensed or paraphrased in one or more of the Gospels).

Scholars look at the Gospels from two opposing points of view: (1) the Gospels represent the life and faith of the church in the final decades of the first century A.D., so that many important changes occurred in traditions concerning Jesus before their commitment to writing; (2) the Gospels are early, even eyewitness, accounts of the

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 1:50. For a brief analysis of and reply to critical attacks on the authenticity of the "Son of God" passages in the Gospels, see Simon Kistemaker, The Gospels in Current Study, pp. 139-41.

<sup>2</sup>James H. Charlesworth, "Research on the Historical Jesus Today," FSB 6 (1985):113.

<sup>3</sup>R. T. France, "The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus," in History, Criticism & Faith, pp. 101-2, note.

life and teaching of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Perrin, for example, says that the burden of proof of the authenticity of Jesus' sayings will always be on the claim to authenticity. The question must be asked, he says, whether a certain saying should be attributed to Jesus or to the early church. In other words the Gospel sayings must be assumed to be inauthentic unless proven genuine. According to Perrin, "the earliest form of a saying we can reach may be regarded as authentic if it can be shown to be dissimilar to characteristic emphases both of ancient Judaism and of the early Church."<sup>2</sup>

Jeremias, on the other hand, claims that it is the inauthenticity of Synoptic sayings that must be demonstrated, not their authenticity. The burden of proof is on the negative side.<sup>3</sup> Marshall agrees: "A tradition which purports to be recording what Jesus said must be reckoned to be doing precisely this unless there are clear signs to the contrary; in general these signs are lacking."<sup>4</sup>

However, the burden of proof in historiography rests on the one who would deny the authenticity of a Gospel passage. As in American jurisprudence, a given text should be presumed reliable until proven otherwise.<sup>5</sup> Many critics believe that the Gospel writers were

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<sup>1</sup>D. G. A. Calvert, "An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus," NIS 18 (1972):210.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, NTL, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology, Part I: The Proclamation of Jesus, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>I. Howard Marshall, I Believe in the Historical Jesus, p. 200.

<sup>5</sup>S. C. Goetz and C. L. Blomberg, "The Burden of Proof," JSNT 11 (1981):40-1; cf. Jeremias, p. 37; Marshall, pp. 199-200; France, pp. 115-18; Robert H. Stein, "The 'Criteria' for Authenticity," in Gospel

value-laden and biased and so inevitably distorted what they wrote. But this is to confuse fact with interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Even the presence of redactional material and changes in the Gospels does not necessitate the inauthenticity of any material. If historians were to assume that no one ever wrote accurate history (unless proven otherwise), no history could be believed and little could be known. "The writer of any particular piece of history must be assumed reliable until shown to be otherwise."<sup>2</sup>

Robert Stein lists six reasons that the burden of proof in questions of authenticity should rest with those who would deny the historicity of Gospel traditions. (1) Eyewitnesses would have caused traditions to be faithfully preserved and would have discouraged the addition of nonhistorical materials. (2) The centrality of leadership at Jerusalem would have aided the accurate and careful transmission of traditions. (3) The high view of the traditions (cf. Rom. 6:17; 1 Cor. 7:10-12) indicates that they were carefully preserved. (4) The faithful transmission of difficult sayings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:5; Mark 9:2; 10:18; 13:32) evidences reliable transmission of traditions. (5) Many difficult religious problems faced by the early church never show up in the Gospels, so that the view that the early church created Gospel traditions in order to answer its own problems is difficult to hold. (6) Modern inability to memorize large amounts of data does not prove that the early church was incapable of oral transmission of most of the

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Perspectives, 1:227.

<sup>1</sup>Goetz and Blomberg, "The Burden of Proof," p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-52.

Gospel materials.<sup>1</sup>

Criteria for authenticity

A large number of criteria for authenticity have been suggested by various scholars.<sup>2</sup> The basic form-critical approach is to eliminate those sayings that appear to reflect the post-Easter faith of the church and those that can be paralleled in contemporary Judaism. Calvert lists eleven criteria (five negative and six positive) that have been utilized in recent decades. Sayings are considered to be inauthentic if they (1) agree with the teaching of the early church, (2) agree with the contemporary teaching of Judaism, (3) presuppose a situation that would be unthinkable at the time of Jesus, (4) contradict other sayings that are considered more authentic, or (5) are considered to be a development of what is found elsewhere in the Gospels. On the other hand sayings are considered to be authentic if they (1) are distinctive from Jewish thought, (2) are distinctive from the post-Easter thought of the church, (3) contain elements that could not have arisen from the church itself, (4) contain Aramaisms and reflect Palestinian conditions, (5) are located in more than one tradition, or (6) are characteristic of the

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<sup>1</sup>Stein, pp. 226-27.

<sup>2</sup>Polkow has recently catalogued twenty-five criteria that have been suggested or used by various scholars (Dennis Polkow, "Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research," in Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers, pp. 338-39). After dismissing invalid criteria and combining others, he reduces this list to two "preliminary criteria" (discounting redaction and tradition), three "primary criteria" (dissimilarity, coherence, and multiple attestation), and three "secondary criteria" (style, Palestinian context, and scholarly consensus) (pp. 341-55).

recognized teaching of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The negative criteria, however, do not actually assist in deciding which, if any, of the sayings of Jesus are inauthentic. These criteria contain a vast number of unproved assumptions: (1) that it is possible to know completely what the later church taught; (2) that the teaching of the later church was completely different from the teaching of Jesus; (3) that Jesus gave no preparatory teaching to His disciples for use in church situations; (4) that there was no connection between Jesus and contemporary Judaism, nor between Jesus and the Old Testament; (5) that it is possible to judge what would be unthinkable to Jesus; (6) that it is possible to decide more certainly in favor of the authenticity of some sayings than of others; (7) that it is possible to say with certainty that one saying contradicts another, and to know which of the two is the more authentic; and (8) that the shorter version of two parallel but differently developed sayings is always more original.<sup>2</sup> As Wrede warns, "We must never say that if a particular item meant one thing it would not match up with the history of Jesus and that therefore it must mean something else."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," p. 211. See also France, pp. 101-33; Marshall, pp. 199-211; Schillebeeckx, pp. 90-100; David E. Aune, Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels, p. 47; Reginald H. Fuller, The New Testament in Current Study, pp. 32-36; D. A. Carson, "Redaction Criticism: On the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of a Literary Tool," in Scripture and Truth, pp. 125-39. Carson notes that redaction criticism is an inadequate tool for establishing the authenticity of Gospel passages (p. 137).

<sup>2</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," pp. 211-13. Schillebeeckx agrees that all "negative criteria" which offer a basis for a denial of authenticity are unsafe and tend to isolate Jesus from all other traditions and cultures including the Old Testament, Judaism, and the later church (p. 90).

<sup>3</sup>William Wrede, The Messianic Secret, p. 75.



The positive criteria are slightly more helpful, though still unreliable. The practice of assigning authenticity to sayings which demonstrate distinctiveness from Jewish and post-Easter Christian thought presupposes that enough of the thought and teaching of contemporary Judaism and the early church is known to make such a judgment. In many cases critics refer to so-called "church teaching" in the Gospels without having first proved from other sources that such is the case. Furthermore pronouncing certain sayings "distinctive" in no way negates the possible authenticity of the rest of Jesus' sayings which are less distinctive from later church teaching.<sup>1</sup> France says that this criterion of dissimilarity has no right to call any saying inauthentic, since it cannot presume that sayings which do not pass the test are not authentic.<sup>2</sup> Charlesworth calls such methodology "misleading." "A strict application of this method produces a Jesus who was not a Jew and who had no followers."<sup>3</sup> But Jesus was deeply Jewish and set a strong pattern for both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>4</sup>

The criterion that judges sayings authentic if they could not possibly have arisen (or been retained unless authentic) within the church itself ("pillar sayings") is helpful in such cases as Mark 13:32 (the later church would not have attributed lack of knowledge to the Son), but its validity ultimately depends entirely on the interpretation

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<sup>1</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>France, p. 111; cf. Marshall, pp. 201-3; Schillebeeckx, pp. 92-95.

<sup>3</sup>Charlesworth, "Research," p. 113.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 114; cf. Stein, pp. 240-46; Ernst Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, p. 37.

one gives to each saying.<sup>1</sup>

The presence of Aramaisms and reflections of Palestinian conditions may provide some support for authenticity, but the absence of such items does not testify against genuineness. The mere translation of Jesus' sermons and parables from Galilean Aramaic into Greek may have necessitated the omission of some purely Palestinian terminology.<sup>2</sup>

The criterion that bases authenticity on the occurrence of sayings in more than one tradition or source (e.g., in both Mark and Q) is most useful when the saying also occurs in more than one form (e.g., parable, aphorism, proverb). But this concept should not be used negatively, since the appearance of a story in one Gospel and not in others may simply indicate a process of selection or that one author had more information at his disposal than the others (cf. Luke 1:2-3).<sup>3</sup> Jay uses this criterion positively when he shows that instances of Jesus' use of "Son" for Himself occur in all the recognized sources in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, before the "recognized teaching" of Jesus can be used as a criterion by which to judge other sayings, the central message and teaching of Jesus must actually be established. But once it has been established the criterion is of no value, unless the "recognized teaching" has been arrived at arbitrarily or is based on too small a

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<sup>1</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," pp. 215-16; cf. Stein, pp. 247-48.

<sup>2</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," p. 217; cf. Stein, pp. 233-38; Schillebeeckx, pp. 98-99.

<sup>3</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," p. 217; cf. Stein, pp. 229-33; Marshall, pp. 203-4.

<sup>4</sup>Jay, pp. 46-47; cf. Schillebeeckx, p. 95.

sample to be valid.<sup>1</sup> Those who would conclude, for example, that Jesus' parables represent His most authentic teaching ignore the fact that the meaning which one attributes to each parable should accord with Jesus' interpretation of His own ministry as given in more explicit and unambiguous sayings.<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion

Obviously "there is no value in ruling out 'unauthentic material' by means of the negative criteria."<sup>3</sup> Only positive criteria should be used. Sayings which are found to be distinctive from contemporary Judaism and later Christianity should be regarded as authentic, but this does not make such sayings more authentic than other material. Criteria based on specific solutions to the Synoptic problem are suspect, since there is no universal agreement concerning the sources for each Gospel. The assumption that one can arbitrarily (or otherwise) "recognize" the genuine teaching of Jesus as opposed to "unauthentic" accretions is entirely misguided.<sup>4</sup>

Form criticism has been used to determine too many of the

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<sup>1</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," p. 217.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Dodd, Parables of the Kingdom, p. 27. On the criterion of contradiction of authentic sayings, see Stein, pp. 249-50. On the concept of an irreducible minimum of authentic material, see Marshall, pp. 204-5; Stein, pp. 250-51. On the criterion of unintentionality (i.e., that certain laws were followed in developing and applying the traditions so that whatever is contrary to redaction and the general trend of the tradition must be authentic) see Marshall, pp. 205-7; Stein, pp. 238-40. On the criterion of environmental contradiction (presupposing an impossible situation in the life of Jesus) see Stein, pp. 248-49.

<sup>3</sup>Calvert, "Criteria," p. 218.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 218-19.

current criteria. Criteria should be derived from source criticism, redaction criticism, and literary criticism as well. From source criticism Calvert derives some value for the criterion which states that material found in more than one tradition or form is authentic. From form criticism he concludes that there is some limited value in the criterion of distinctiveness or dissimilarity (material distinct from Judaism and the church is authentic). From redaction criticism he draws the criterion that the inclusion of material that does not especially serve the author's purpose in writing may testify to the authenticity of that material.<sup>1</sup> In the final analysis, however, purely positive (and subjective) criteria lead only to a judgment in favor of the authenticity of certain sayings and have nothing at all to say concerning a possible lack of authenticity in any Gospel passage.

Stein concludes that no one criterion can prove that a Gospel saying is authentic; however, if a saying meets most or all of the positive criteria, then a reasonable claim to authenticity can be made.<sup>2</sup> Marshall, however, proposes what he calls the criterion of traditional continuity. He suggests that the question must be asked, "What cause must be postulated to explain the creation of the tradition?" The obvious explanation that each tradition originated in the actual

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Stein, p. 252. Stein concludes, "Only four criteria can be used to argue for the inauthenticity of a saying: the criterion of the tendencies of the developing tradition, the criterion of modification by Jewish Christianity, the criterion of environmental contradiction, and the criterion of contradiction of authentic sayings" (p. 253). He adds that if a continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith can be established by these criteria, then the other sayings should be assumed to be authentic until proven otherwise.

ministry of Jesus should be accepted unless other factors make this explanation unlikely.<sup>1</sup>

Goetz and Blomberg suggest only two tests for inauthenticity: correspondence and coherence. If a tradition is authentic, it must correspond to what actually took place; if it is inauthentic it will not correspond to what actually occurred. It would obviously be difficult to use the correspondence test to either verify or falsify a saying of Jesus. The test of coherence simply applies the laws of logic to reality; all truth coheres together. What is contradictory cannot be true. Historians must attempt to harmonize apparently contradictory material until the harmonization becomes more incredible than inauthenticity. An example of the coherence test is the criterion of multiple attestation. Single attestation, however, does not prove inauthenticity, since by definition singly attested material is not contradicted. Archaeological discoveries may show that statements in the text correspond to what actually existed. A test may cohere with evidence about the known conditions of Palestine at the time of Jesus; if so, the probability of authenticity is increased.<sup>2</sup>

Gospel critics should therefore begin by assuming the authenticity of their texts, and then examine any evidence of lack of correspondence or coherence that contradicts that assumption. Inauthenticity demands the violation of at least one of these two

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>Goetz and Blomberg, "The Burden of Proof," pp. 53-55. They correctly note that the criterion of dissimilarity (distinctiveness) used negatively is totally invalid (p. 56).

principles.<sup>1</sup> The other criteria may be used positively to support the authenticity of some material for skeptics, but "it does not follow that other teaching is not characteristic of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> The criteria should not be used negatively to exclude sayings. The proper use of these criteria supports the present writer's contention that all the Synoptic examples of the application of the title "Son" or "Son of God" to Jesus should be considered authentic.

#### God as "Abba"

The precise meaning of the title Son of God is to be found in Jesus' intense and constant awareness of God as His Father.<sup>3</sup> As Pannenberg says, "one cannot properly understand Jesus' Sonship without taking his relation to God the Father as the point of departure."<sup>4</sup>

Jeremias lists the following statistics for Jesus' use of Father for God: Matthew has forty-two occurrences; Mark, four; Luke, fifteen; and John, 109.<sup>5</sup> If instances of the term in prayer are removed and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>France, p. 114.

<sup>3</sup>F. F. Bruce, Jesus: Lord & Savior, JL, p. 158. T. W. Manson has analyzed the use of the term "Father" for God in the Synoptic Gospels (The Teaching of Jesus, pp. 89-115). On Jesus' view of God as Father, cf. also Pannenberg, pp. 229-32.

<sup>4</sup>Pannenberg, p. 334. He adds that "the divinity of Jesus as Son is mediated, established through his dedication to the Father. In the execution of this dedication, Jesus is the Son" (p. 336). "Jesus," he says, "is the Son of the eternal Father only in his complete dedication to the will of the Father" (p. 349). Cf. also pp. 53-54, 150-58, 342-44.

<sup>5</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Prayers of Jesus, p. 29. Assuming form critical and redaction critical conclusions, Jeremias concludes that there was a growing tendency from Mark to John to introduce the title "Father" into Jesus' sayings (p. 30).

parallel texts are counted only once (giving priority to Mark), Jesus uses the term three times in Mark, four times in material common to Matthew and Luke, four times in Luke's special material, thirty-one times in the remaining sections of Matthew, and one hundred times in John.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus apparently never called God the Father of Israel or of Israelites in general. He spoke of God as "my Father" and as the Father of His disciples ("your Father").<sup>2</sup> But He never included anyone with Himself in saying "our Father" (the so-called Lord's Prayer was for the disciples, Matt. 6:9). Jesus did not teach that God is the Father of all men, but rather that God's fatherhood depends on man's relationship to Himself (cf. Matt. 5:44-48; 6:8, 32; 7:11; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:36; 12:30-32). In His prayers, Jesus always addressed God as Father (cf. Matt. 11:25-27; Mark 14:36; Luke 23:34, 46; John 11:41; 12:27-28; 17).<sup>3</sup> The term ὁ πατήρ occurs only on the lips of Jesus. It is usually found with "the Son" or "the Son of Man" (an exception is Luke 11:13). It is found both in (so-called) Q (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22) and in Mark (13:32).<sup>4</sup> According to Schrenk, this form of "the Father" is both good Palestinian and good classical Greek usage.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Father," by Otfried Hofius, 1 (1975):619. On God as Father in "Q," cf. Athanasius Polag, Die Christologie der Logienquelle, pp. 59-60.

<sup>2</sup>Eduard Schweizer, "Gottessohn und Christus," in Theologie, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Hofius, p. 620.

<sup>4</sup>A helpful analysis of the validity of the "Q" hypothesis is that of Theodore R. Rosché, "The Words of Jesus and the Future of the 'Q' Hypothesis," JBL 79 (1960):210-20.

<sup>5</sup>TLNT, s.v. "πατήρ," by Gottlob Schrenk, 5 (1967):989.

On the other hand, Jews rarely called God "my Father," preferring instead "our Father."<sup>1</sup> The fifth and sixth petitions of the "Eighteen Supplications" (ca. A.D. 110) address God as "our Father [אֱלֹהֵינוּ], our King" [מְלִכֵנוּ]. It was unusual for Jews to refer to God informally as Father without adding the description "heavenly." Jesus, however, apparently never addressed God in prayer as "my Father in heaven," but only as "my Father" (Abba).<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence in the literature of early Palestinian Judaism that "my Father" was used as a personal address to God. The few instances of God being addressed as Father occur in Hellenistic Judaism under Greek influence. There is "no analogy at all in the whole literature of Jewish prayer for God being addressed as Abba."<sup>3</sup> In contrast Jesus always addressed God this way.<sup>4</sup> Jeremias concludes that "Abba" is thus an unmistakable characteristic of the ipsissima vox Jesu.<sup>5</sup> "There is nothing in Rabbinic literature which corresponds to

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Klostermann, Das Markusevangelium, pp. 150-51.

<sup>2</sup>Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, pp. 190-91 (for a discussion of Jesus' use of "the Father," cf. pp. 192-94); cf. also bTaanith 25b. On the use of the term "Father" for God in the Jewish synagogue liturgy, see Frederick C. Grant, Ancient Judaism and the New Testament, pp. 41-56; C. G. Montefiore, Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings, p. 126. Montefiore demonstrates various uses of "Father in heaven" and "my Father" among rabbis (pp. 126-29), but all are later than the time of Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 57; cf. Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, 6 vols., 1:134-35; 3:15-22; Marvin W. Meyer, Who Do People Say I Am?, pp. 27-28.

<sup>4</sup>According to Schedl, "Abba" must have been Jesus' typical address to God, since even Paul gives it in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 (Schedl, p. 187).

<sup>5</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 57.



this use of 'my Father' by Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Michel adds that addressing God as "my Father" "does not occur in the charismatic circles in Judaism."<sup>2</sup> When Jesus calls God "my Father," He thus expresses a unique relationship with God. "A new way of praying is born. Jesus talks to his Father as naturally, as intimately and with the same sense of security as a child talks to his father."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus used "Father" in all His prayers (the single exception is the quotation from Ps. 22:1 on the cross).<sup>4</sup> The address "Father" was thus deeply rooted in the tradition of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Apart from parallels, the Gospels show Jesus addressing God as Father in prayer once in Mark, three times in Q, twice in other Lucan material, once elsewhere in Matthew, and nine times in John.

Jeremias believes that Jesus always used the Aramaic word "abba" in prayer, because of the following: (1) the use of "Abba" at Mark 14:36; (2) the witness of Paul in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6, indicating that the use of an Aramaic word in the prayer of Greek-speaking churches must be due to the example of Jesus; and (3) the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 53. The only prefigurements for this usage are in 2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:7; 89:26 (p. 54). Montefiore admits that the phrase "my Father" was rare among the rabbis (as compared with "our Father"), since to say "my Father" might seem familiar and be considered an infringement on proper reverence for God. More importantly, he says, the rabbis taught that every Israelite's prayers should include the community and not tend to separate him from it (p. 128).

<sup>2</sup>NIDNIT, s.v. "Son," by Otto Michel, 3 (1978):639.

<sup>3</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>John Greehey and Matthew Vellanickal, "Le Caractère Unique et Singulier de Jésus comme Fils de Dieu," in Bible et Christologie, p. 180.

<sup>5</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, pp. 54-55.

variation in the form of the Greek vocative between πάτερ, πάτερ μου, and ὁ πατήρ (e.g., the original "Abba" used by Jesus is rendered ὁ πατήρ by Mark 14:36, πάτερ μου by Matt. 26:39, and πάτερ by Luke 22:42).<sup>1</sup>

Dunn admits that this use of "Abba" distinguished Jesus significantly from contemporary Jews.<sup>2</sup> Though Jews sometimes prayed to God as Father, "no Jew anywhere had dared to address the utterly transcendent God as 'Daddy.'"<sup>3</sup> Jeremias lists about forty occurrences of "abba" as a vocative in New Testament and rabbinic literature, ranging chronologically from about 90 B.C. (bTaanith 23a) to the fifth century A.D. (Palestinian Syriac version).<sup>4</sup> The earliest two examples (bTaanith 23a and 23b) are from the speech of children. "Abba" is a pure exclamatory form, lacking both inflections and possessive suffixes, and as such could also stand for "his father" and "our father." It could be used as a respectful address to old men, but it derived from the language of small children. According to the Talmud, "When a child

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-56.

<sup>2</sup>James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>John M. McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," Gr 62 (1981):279. Jesus spoke of and to God as "Abba" only in personal prayer and private instruction. On Jesus' use of "Abba," see Goppelt, 1:202-5; Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, pp. 307-8; Joachim Jeremias, Abba, pp. 15-67; idem, The Central Message of the New Testament, pp. 17-30; I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," Interp 21 (1967):89-90; B. M. F. Van Iersel, "Der Sohn" in Den Synoptischen Jesusworten, SNT, pp. 93-116; TDNT, s.v. "πατήρ," by Gottlob Schrenk and Gottfried Quell, 5 (1967):945-1014; Herbert F. Stevenson, Titles of the Triune God, pp. 94-98. Stevenson says that no individual Jew would have used Father for God in private prayers and devotions (p. 95), but this probably goes beyond the evidence.

<sup>4</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 58, n. 32.

experiences the taste of wheat it learns to say abba and imma" (bBer. 40a; bSanh. 70b). The Targum paraphrases Isaiah 8:4, "Before the child learns to call abba and imma." Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, who were born in Antioch of Syria, report that small Syrian children used to call their father "abba."<sup>1</sup> At the time of Jesus, even grown children addressed their fathers in everyday conversation as "abba."

There is, however, no example in Jewish prayer literature of the use of the vocative "abba" in address to God. Even the use of "abba" for God in statements was generally avoided. The only example of "abba" in the Targums for God as "my Father" is at Psalm 89:26.<sup>2</sup> The only other passage in the Targums where "abba" is applied to God is at Malachi 2:10.<sup>3</sup> "Abba" is used of God in only one other rabbinic passage. According to an old anecdote, the rabbis used to send children to Chanin ha-Nechba, grandson of Onias the Circle-maker, saying to him, "Abba, Abba, give us rain." Chanin said to God, "Lord of the universe, render a service to those who cannot distinguish between the Abba who gives rain and the Abba who does not."<sup>4</sup> Vermes claims that this makes God "Abba" for the Jewish charismatic,<sup>5</sup> but actually Chanin himself

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<sup>1</sup>Chrysostom Homily on the Epistle to the Romans 14; Theodore of Mopsuestia Commentary on the Pauline Epistles (see on Rom. 8:15).

<sup>2</sup>Targum on the Psalms 89. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Targum on Malachi 2. 10.

<sup>4</sup>bTaanith 23b, dated late first century B.C.

<sup>5</sup>Vermes, p. 211.

addresses God as "Master of the world" rather than "Abba."<sup>1</sup>

"Abba" is a vocative form and represents the babbling of an infant like the Greek  $\alpha\beta\beta\alpha$ .<sup>2</sup> According to Aune, "abba" is the reduplication of the initial syllable  $\alpha\beta$  in the final syllable  $\alpha\beta$ , which is a characteristic of speech development in young children. "In the colloquial speech of Jesus' time, 'abba' was primarily used as a term of informal intimacy and respect by children of their fathers."<sup>3</sup>

To a Jew, addressing God as "Abba" would have been disrespectful and therefore virtually inconceivable. But Jesus spoke as a child to his father. It "implies a rejection of all religious pretension."<sup>4</sup> As Jeremias notes, "Jesus' use of abba in addressing God reveals the heart of his relationship with God."<sup>5</sup> It is not that Jesus spoke to God in childish chatter (even grown children addressed their fathers as "abba"), but rather it shows His complete surrender in obedience to the Father (cf. Mark 14:36).<sup>6</sup> The "ultimate mystery" of Jesus is His

<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, pp. 61, 108-11.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Homer Iliad 5. 408; Odyssey 6. 57.

<sup>3</sup>ISBE, s.v. "Abba," by David E. Aune, 1 (1979):3; cf. Dalman, Words, p. 192; TDNT, s.v. " $\alpha\beta\beta\alpha$ ," by Gerhard Kittel, 1 (1964):6; NIDNTT, s.v. "Father," by Otfried Hofius, 1 (1975):614.

<sup>4</sup>Schrenk, p. 985.

<sup>5</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 62.

<sup>6</sup>Schillebeeckx says that for the Jew the term "Abba" mainly implied paternal authority and fatherly instruction (pp. 262-63). The father was the focus of the family. What was the father's was also the son's, and vice versa (cf. Luke 15:31). The son was to be instructed by the father (cf. Prov. 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1-2; 5:1; 6:20; 7:1; 10:1) and to be totally obedient to his will (cf. Matt. 26:42; Luke 21:42; Sirach 3:2, 6; 7:27).

"filial relation" to God.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Jesus distinguishes between "my Father" and "your Father" shows that for Him "Abba" expresses a special relationship with God<sup>2</sup> and an attitude of trust, obedience, and authority (cf. Matt. 11:25-30).<sup>3</sup> According to Bezançon, a "unique and unprecedented" relationship is indicated.<sup>4</sup>

According to Matthew 11:25-27, the Father had given Jesus complete divine knowledge and authority. In giving the "Lord's Prayer" to the disciples, Jesus authorized them to say "Abba" also, with the restriction that they must reserve it for God and not use it in everyday speech as a title of courtesy (cf. Matt. 23:9). In Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15, Paul says that for a Christian to address God as "Abba" is only possible within his new relationship with God that has been given by God's Son. When a believer cries "Abba," God assures him that he can be certain that he really is a child of God (cf. 2 Cor. 6:18).<sup>5</sup>

In the Greek text, Jesus addresses God as Father in prayer in three ways: (1) *πάτερ*, the Greek vocative (Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21a;

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<sup>1</sup>Commission Biblique Pontificale, *Bible et Christologie*, pp. 92-93. All the deeds and perfect obedience of Jesus (cf. Mark 14:36; Luke 2:49) result from this intimate filial relationship (pp. 94-95).

<sup>2</sup>Jeremias, *Prayers*, pp. 62, 95-97.

<sup>3</sup>Hofius, p. 615. Schrenk (p. 988) emphasizes that Jesus never associated Himself with the disciples in saying "our Father." His "my Father" expresses a special relationship to God which cannot be transferred. In Luke 2:49 Jesus links both the house of God and the Word of God to His sense of a unique relationship to the Father.

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Noël Bezançon, *Le Christ de Dieu*, p. 55. According to Greehey and Vellanickal, the term expresses the confidence and obedience of an infant (p. 181).

<sup>5</sup>Jeremias, *Prayers*, pp. 63-65. Hofius notes that in common Jewish usage "abba" had acquired a warm familiar sense corresponding to "dear father" (p. 614).

11:2; 22:42; 23:34, 46);<sup>1</sup> (2) ὁ πατήρ, the articular nominative used as a vocative (Mark 14:36--the second member of a compound address is always in the nominative;<sup>2</sup> Matt. 11:26; Luke 10:21b)—a Semitism, as the vocative in Hebrew and Aramaic is the articular nominative;<sup>3</sup> and (3) πάτερ μου, the Greek vocative with the first person singular possessive pronoun (Matt. 26:39, 42). The term "abba" could be translated in each of these ways, and thus was probably the original address used in all of Jesus' prayers. His frequent use of the term (more than 125 instances apart from prayer throughout the four Gospels) testifies to Jesus' claim to special intimacy with God.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus probably spoke to His disciples on occasion concerning His unique experience of God as "Abba," but He was reticent about speaking of His sonship and of God as Father to those who were not His followers.<sup>5</sup> In addition Jesus spoke of God as "your Father" only to His

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<sup>1</sup>Πάτερ alone is the way a Greek son would address his father (cf. Epictetus *Dissertationes* 1. 26. 5; Tobit 5:1; Josephus *Antiquities* 6. 127; 16. 105; idem, *Jewish War* 1. 621).

<sup>2</sup>A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 461.

<sup>3</sup>James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols., vol. 3: *Syntax*, by Nigel Turner, p. 34. McCasland says that ὁ πατήρ in Mark 14:36 is not a translation of "Abba," but it means "my Father" or "our Father," using Father as an appellative (as in "God the Father," 1 Thess. 1:1). When Jesus says "the Father," He means "My Father." The definite article in Greek often has the significance of a possessive pronoun. McCasland translates the address in Mark 14:36 as "O God, my Father," taking "Abba" as a metonym for God and the article as possessive (S. Vernon McCasland, "Abba, Father," *JBL* 72 [1953]:86-90).

<sup>4</sup>Aune, "Abba," p. 3. Bauckham concludes, "We have no evidence that others before Jesus addressed God as Abba" ("Sonship," p. 249).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 250; cf. Manson, p. 98; Jeremias, *Prayers*, p. 53.

disciples, never to others except in parables and metaphors.<sup>1</sup> Sproul notes that to a certain extent the very fact that Jesus called God His Father and prayed to God as Father led many Jews to conclude that Jesus was making Himself equal with God and thus blaspheming.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, "It is most unlikely that this surprising linguistic innovation should be the work of the community."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus' first reference to God as His Father (Luke 2:49) likewise witnesses to His unique sonship. The point of Luke 2:49 is Christological: "Jesus is the Son who stands in an exclusive relationship to the Father."<sup>4</sup> If Jesus has a mutual relationship with God as Father (cf. Luke 10:22), then He is above Mary and Joseph and can respond to their claims by appealing to His special relationship to His Father.<sup>5</sup> Though the origin of Jesus' self-consciousness is not thereby explained, Taylor says that "it was through His knowledge of God as 'My Father', deepened and enriched by experiences of prayer and communion with Him,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 43; cf. idem, Abba, pp. 56-67; Van Iersel, pp. 93-104, 113-16.

<sup>2</sup>R. C. Sproul, "Son of God and Son of Man," Tenth 9 (July 1979):17.

<sup>3</sup>TDNT, s.v. "πάτερ," by Eduard Schweizer, 8 (1972):366. For an overview of the use of the term "Father" for God during the first century A.D., cf. A. Lukyn Williams, "'My Father' in Jewish Thought of the First Century," JThS 31 (1929):42-47. Williams concludes that the writers of the Gospels thought of Jesus as having a divine, preexistent relationship with God (p. 47). Montefiore disputes this, claiming that a number of Jewish rabbis used the address "my Father" without believing that they were semidivine beings (p. 129). Schillebeeckx also comments that one should not try to build a concept of Jesus' transcendent sonship on His unique use of "Abba" (p. 260).

<sup>4</sup>Henk J. de Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Luke II. 41-51a," NTS 24 (1978):353.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 352. He says that Mary's reference to "your father and I" (2:48) signals a play on the meaning of the word "Father" (p. 353).

that Jesus came to know Himself as 'the Son.'<sup>1</sup>

The search for a definition of the title Son of God must therefore begin with the acknowledgment that Jesus claimed God as His Father in a sense that was totally unique and unparalleled in ancient Judaism.<sup>2</sup> Nothing in the Old Testament or in contemporary Judaism prepared the early believers to accept Jesus' claims or His use of "Abba" for God as simply the expression of Jewish piety.<sup>3</sup>

#### Jesus as the Son

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus uses only two titles of Himself: "the Son of Man"<sup>4</sup> and "the Son." It is the title "Son" that provides a

<sup>1</sup>Taylor, The Person of Christ, p. 180 (cf. pp. 172-80). Not everyone agrees with these conclusions. Klausner says that Jesus developed an exaggerated sense of the nearness of God and an excessive emphasis on the personal fatherhood of God because He looked on Himself as the Messiah (p. 378). As Messiah He was closer to God than anyone else, so that God was His Father in a special sense. E. L. Allen says that Jesus was simply the shaliach or delegate (representative) of God in the world, as His disciples were to be for Him (cf. Matt. 13:20; Mark 9:37) ("Representative-Christology in the New Testament," HTR 46 [1953]:163). Because He is one in mind and will with God, He can exercise authority among men. This is seen in His forgiveness of sinners and in His setting aside of customs regarding fasting and Sabbath-keeping (p. 165). "There is no claim here to divinity in a metaphysical sense, but the simple acknowledgment of his status and mission as God's vicegerent during his ministry" (pp. 165-66). Allen contends that "the lordship of Christ is a delegated one and therefore temporary; the power he wields to subdue his enemies is really God's power as this is vested in him" (p. 164).

<sup>2</sup>On the possible relationship of "Abba" to the title "Son of Man," cf. Seyoon Kim, "The 'Son of Man'" as the Son of God, pp. 74-75.

<sup>3</sup>In the light of this evidence, surely Montefiore's comment that "there was nothing in the language or in the terminology used by Jesus which would have seemed novel to any Rabbinic Jew" (p. 114) cannot be taken seriously.

<sup>4</sup>According to Raisanen, as Son of Man Jesus is already Son of God (Heikki Räisänen, Das "Messiasgeheimnis" im Markusevangelium, p. 106).



key to the "deepest mystery of Jesus' self-consciousness."<sup>1</sup> Since Jesus often spoke of God as His Father, it would only be one step further to speak of Himself as His Son. Marshall notes that

this use of the category of Sonship would be based upon Jesus' consciousness of a unique filial relationship to God rather than upon the conviction that as the Messiah he was the Son of God. The evidence strongly suggests that the fundamental point in Jesus' self-understanding was his filial relationship to God and that it was from this basic conviction that he undertook the tasks variously assigned to the Messiah, Son of Man and Servant of Yahweh. . . . the argument that "the Son" was not a current messianic title becomes irrelevant.<sup>2</sup>

Whether Jesus ever called Himself the "Son" is a matter of some debate. Bornkamm, for example, relegates all Synoptic instances of Jesus' use of the term "Son" for Himself to the creative theology of the early church.<sup>3</sup> Pannenberg also says that Jesus may not have spoken of Himself as "Son," and concludes that the Palestinian community later called Him "Son" because He had spoken of God as His "Father."<sup>4</sup>

Most scholars, however, recognize that Jesus spoke of His relationship with God as a Father-Son relationship.<sup>5</sup> The term "Son"

<sup>1</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 278. On Jesus' use of the title "the Son," see pp. 282-301.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," p. 93. Marshall notes that evidence that "the Father" was an early designation for God can be found in Acts 1:4, 7; 2:33; Rom. 6:4; Phil. 1:11 (the latter may be pre-Pauline). He notes that it is certain that Jesus used the title "Son of Man," and "extremely likely that this title expressed his consciousness of divinity" (pp. 92-93).

<sup>3</sup>Günther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup>Pannenberg, pp. 158-59. He sums up the relationship of Jesus as Son to the Father as "obedience" (p. 159).

<sup>5</sup>Lewis S. Hay, "The Son-of-God Christology in Mark," JBR 32 (1964):111.

must be traced back to Jesus Himself.<sup>1</sup> Moule argues that the very concept of Jesus' unique sonship originated with Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Grundmann says that the Christian use of "Son" could not be derived either from contemporary Judaism or from Hellenism, and thus must have originated in the distinct teaching and life of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

In the Synoptics Jesus speaks of Himself as Son in two primary aspects: (1) His unique relationship to the Father, and (2) the obedience of the Son in the fulfillment of the Father's plan.<sup>4</sup> The first aspect is most important. Jesus is the Son principally in His unique relationship to God and His unique life of prayer.<sup>5</sup> None of the passages in which Jesus presents Himself as the Son imply that Jesus thought of His sonship as having a beginning. As Dalman notes, "It seems to be an innate property of His personality."<sup>6</sup>

Hahn notes that the absolute title "the Son" is found in the Synoptic Gospels only three times (with one parallel), and concludes

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<sup>1</sup>Augustin George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu dans L'Évangile selon Saint Luc," RB 72 (1965):185.

<sup>2</sup>C. F. D. Moule, The Origin of Christology, pp. 30-31.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Grundmann, Die Gotteskindschaft in der Geschichte Jesu und ihre religionsgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen, pp. 49-53. Grundmann here fails to attribute to Jesus any unique concept of sonship (cf. p. 66), though he later modifies his view somewhat (idem, "Sohn Gottes," ZNW 47 [1956]:130).

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, p. 283.

<sup>5</sup>Michel, p. 640.

<sup>6</sup>Dalman, p. 285. Schrenk notes that the terms Son of Man and Father/Son are linked in Matt. 16:27; 25:31, 34; 26:63-64; Mark 8:38; 14:61-62; Luke 9:26; 22:69 (p. 989). He says that the Father of the Son of Man is the same as the absolute Father, and both terms should be regarded as an integral part of the preaching of Jesus Himself.

that the designation derives mainly from Jesus' use of "Abba" for God, with roots in the messianic tradition of the Old Testament (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14).<sup>1</sup> He contends, however, that the absolute title "Son" must be distinguished from the title "Son of God," since there is "no clear reference to the designation of God as Father in any place where the title 'Son of God' is used."<sup>2</sup> He believes that "the designation 'the Son' belongs to a relatively independent stratum of tradition and was associated only secondarily with the conception of the Son of God."<sup>3</sup>

However, this distinction of usage may be due to the fact that once "God" has been mentioned in the title "Son of God," no reason exists in most contexts to note redundantly that the "Son of God" has a Father. Conversely once Jesus has referred to God as "Abba" ("My Father"), there is usually no need to use the full title "Son of God." "The Son of the Father" would sound odd as a description of Jesus by those who recognized His sonship. Whatever distinctions can be drawn are due more to context and purpose than to different traditions.

Van Iersel likewise criticizes Hahn's absolute distinction between the two designations, and says that the title Son of God is probably derived from "the Son."<sup>4</sup> According to Grundmann "the Son" is the oldest Christology and this then developed separately into the

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<sup>1</sup>Hahn, p. 313. Hahn says that he cannot decide whether the absolute use of "the Father" and "the Son" first arose in Palestine. For a critique of Hahn cf. Philipp Vielhauer, Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament, pp. 187-98.

<sup>2</sup>Hahn, pp. 279-80.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>4</sup>Van Iersel, pp. 180-82, 185-91.

designations Son of Man and Son of God.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary, however, to posit an evolution of any of these titles. Hahn's distinction between "the Son" and "the Son of God" breaks down throughout the New Testament. John clearly uses the two titles indiscriminately. In 1 John 4:14-15, for example, the terms "Father," "His Son," and "Son of God" appear in the same context. Mark in 13:32 gives the title "the Son" the same significance he gives elsewhere to "the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> The antecedent of the forms "My Son" and "His Son" may be either "God" or "Father," and thus could be taken as equivalent to either "Son" or "Son of God" (cf. Matt. 2:15; Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Gal. 1:16; Col. 1:13). In Matthew 16:16-17 "the Son of the living God" appears in conjunction with a reference to revelation from "My Father." Other examples of the title "Father" used in conjunction with the title "Son of God" exist (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 4:6, 13; Rev. 2:18, 27). In Galatians 4:6 "God," "Son," and "Father" appear together, and in 1 Corinthians 15:28 "God" and "the Son" appear together. It must therefore be concluded that both "the Son" and "the Son of God" relate the same idea: the unique filial relationship of Jesus to God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Grundmann, "Matth. XI. 27 und die Johanneischen 'Der Vater—Der Sohn'-Stellen," *NTS* 12 (1965):46.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>James R. Edwards, "The Son of God: Its Antecedents in Judaism and Hellenism and Its Use in the Earliest Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 109. Marshall notes that the title "the Son" in Hebrews is often due to the influence of the LXX and to the use of previous reference (cf. Heb. 1:2, 5, 8; 7:28). In many places the addition of the genitive "of God" would be stylistically awkward and unnecessary ("The Divine Sonship of Jesus," p. 88).

In Matthew

Matthew gives more prominence to Jesus' sonship than either of the other Synoptics.<sup>1</sup> According to Kingsbury, the terms "My Son" (Matt. 2:15; 3:17; 17:5; 21:37), "the Son" (11:27; 21:38; 24:36; 28:19), and "Son of God" (4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54) are understood by Matthew as variant expressions of the same title.<sup>2</sup> The title Son of God in some form is applied to Jesus nine times in Matthew. As Blair notes, "Four times the word 'Son' has no article, while the word 'God' does (4:3, 6; 8:29; 27:40); three times neither word has the article (14:33; 27:43, 54); and twice both words have the article (16:16; 26:63)." He concludes, however, that "in all the above phrases we should translate 'the Son of God.'"<sup>3</sup>

Kingsbury has shown that the title Son of God is the central and dominant term in Matthew's Christology.<sup>4</sup> The words "God with us" in

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<sup>1</sup>Taylor, The Person of Christ, p. 16. In Matthew Jesus is "divine both before and after the Resurrection."

<sup>2</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, p. 42. On the title Son of God in Matthew, see *ibid.*, pp. 40-83; Warfield, pp. 78-83, 91-94. For overviews of the Son of God Christology of Matthew, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, Matthew, PC, pp. 34-53; William R. Farmer, Jesus and the Gospel, pp. 159-61. On Matthew's presentation of Jesus as both Messiah and Son of God, see Birger Gerhardsson, "Gottes Sohn als Diener Gottes," StTh 27 (1973):73-106. On the problems inherent in Synoptic studies, see John Riches, Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism, pp. 44-61. For two analyses of the Synoptic problem, see Werner Georg Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 42-80; and Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, pp. 121-236.

<sup>3</sup>Edward P. Blair, Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, p. 61. Blair bases his conclusion on Colwell's rule, and says that the clue to what Matthew meant by the title is found in Matthew 14:33, where the disciples confess Jesus as "the Son of God."

<sup>4</sup>Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, pp. 40-82; *idem*, "The Title 'Son of God' in Matthew's Gospel," BThB 5 (1975):5. According to Fuller, however, of 12 occurrences of the title Son of God

Matthew 1:23 may constitute Matthew's "thumbnail definition" of the title.<sup>1</sup> According to Liddon this reference to the Immanuel prophecy shows that Matthew thought of Jesus' sonship as being of the divine essence.<sup>2</sup> Kingsbury summarizes the Christology of the first section of Matthew as follows: "Jesus, in the line of David (1:21), is the Son of God (2:15; 3:17), that is to say, he has his origin in God (1:20) and is the one chosen to shepherd the eschatological people of God (2:6), for, empowered by God for messianic ministry (3:16-17), he proves himself in confrontation with Satan to be perfectly obedient to the will of God (4:3-4, 5-7, 8-10); as such a one, he saves his (God's) people from

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in Matthew, six are from Mark, two are from Q, two (14:33 and 16:16) are due to conflation between non-Marcan and Marcan material, and one is in an Old Testament citation (2:15). The only clearly redactional occurrence is at 27:41, he says, thus concluding that Son of God is not the key title in Matthew (Fuller and Perkins, p. 85). What Fuller ignores, of course, is that Matthew's inclusion of traditional material is part of his redactional emphasis. Fuller also appears to omit Matthew 28:19.

<sup>1</sup>Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, p. 53. For a literary-rhetorical analysis of Matthew's Christology, cf. idem, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Literary-Critical Probe," JSNT 21 (1984):3-36; idem, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Rejoinder to David Hill," JSNT 25 (1985):61-81. Kingsbury's conclusion that "Matthew's christology is preeminently a Son-of-God christology" (p. 3) is rejected by David Hill ("The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Response to Professor Kingsbury's Literary-Critical Probe," JSNT 21 [1984]:37-52).

<sup>2</sup>H. P. Liddon, The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, p. 247. In a rather convoluted way, even Styler admits that Matthew contains "at least the beginnings of an interest . . . in the divine nature of Christ" (G. M. Styler, "Stages in Christology in the Synoptic Gospels," NTS 10 [1964]:404). Benjamin W. Bacon, however, says that the miraculous birth narrative in Matthew was developed in order to prove that Jesus was the Son of God (and Son of David) from birth, and not just from His baptism (Studies in Matthew, pp. 149-50). The purpose, he says, was to defeat Gnostic, Docetic, and Adoptionist heresies.

their sins (1:21)."<sup>1</sup> The title "Son of God" names the category that is at the heart of Matthew's Christology.<sup>2</sup>

Matthew shows in four primary passages that God now dwells with His people: 1:23; 14:27; 18:20; 28:20. Jesus enjoys an exclusive relationship with God, with divine authority to reveal the Father and power from the Spirit. He lives in complete fellowship with God and is perfectly obedient to His will. Israel does not perceive His divine sonship, however, and rejects Him as Messiah. Following His death, God raises Him to life and exalts Him to universal authority. Son of God is the one Christological title that is applied to every phase of Jesus' life: conception, birth, infancy, baptism, temptation, public ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew*, PC, p. 40. He says that Matthew 1:18-25 is crucial to the Christology of Matthew, and that here Matthew begins to make the title Son of God superior to the title Son of David (p. 37). Matthew develops the title Messiah in terms of (1) the "King of the Jews" and (2) the "Son of God" (p. 34). In Matthew 27 the title "King of Israel" gives way to the title "Son of God." The divine sonship of Jesus the Messiah also permeates Matthew 1:1--4:16 (p. 36). Scriptures relating to the house of David find their fulfillment in Jesus as the Son of God (cf. Matt. 1:23; 2:6; 3:17; 4:15-16; 17:5; 22:41-6). The title Son of God encompasses, envelopes, and supersedes the titles "Son of Abraham" and "Son of David" in Matthew (p. 38); cf. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, p. 79. Vögtle suggests that Matthew 1 is in fact a midrash on the titles "Son of David," "Son of Abraham" (the genealogy), and "Son of God" (Matt. 1:18-25) (Anton Vögtle, *Messias und Gottessohn*, pp. 18-19).

<sup>2</sup>Kingsbury, *Matthew*, PC, p. 36. He claims that the title Son of God "expresses for Matthew the deepest mystery of the person of Jesus Messiah" (idem, "Title," p. 30). It is also the complement of Matthew's favorite expression for God: Jesus' "Father."

<sup>3</sup>Idem, "Title," pp. 29-30. D. A. Carson attempts to show that Matthew distinguishes between three levels of Christological understanding: (1) the perception by demons, soldiers, and disciples that Jesus is the Messiah; (2) the statements of Jesus that He is the Son with a unique relationship to the Father (11:27); and (3) the presentation by Matthew of Jesus' virginal conception and His essential

Although the dominant Christological title in Matthew is Son of God, the theme of servanthood also gives some content to his Christology.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that the longest citation from the Old Testament in the Gospel is the Servant proclamation from Isaiah 42:1-4 (in Matt. 12).<sup>2</sup> In addition Matthew clearly identifies the Son of God with the Son of Man (cf. 16:13-17; 25:31-34).<sup>3</sup>

Matthew 11:27. Marshall says that the main weight of the evidence for Jesus' use of the title "Son" falls on Matthew 11:27.<sup>4</sup> According to Hunter, Matthew 11:25-30 are "perhaps the most important verses in the Synoptic Gospels."<sup>5</sup> Vos agrees that 11:27 is "by far the

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identity as God's Son as seen in 1:18-23 ("Christological Ambiguities in the Gospel of Matthew," in Christ the Lord, pp. 112-13).

<sup>1</sup>David Hill, "Son and Servant," JSNT 6 (1980):15. He says that in Matthew Jesus' sonship is expounded in terms of Jesus' servanthood and by His exemplification of the Servant of Yahweh.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9. Eduard Schweizer says that Matthew bases the Son of God predicate both on the idea of the suffering righteous man (cf. Wisdom of Solomon) and on Christ's miracles and apocalyptic events (cf. Matt. 27:54) ("υἱός," p. 380). For Matthew, "Jesus is not just the suffering Righteous but also the apocal. Son of God who achieves the miracle of new creation" (p. 380, n. 330). Schweizer also states that a comparison of Matthew 16:16 and 26:63 with Mark shows that the title Son of God was already the customary title used for Jesus by the time of the writing of Matthew.

<sup>3</sup>Kim, p. 3. Kim shows that each of the Gospels identify the Son of Man with the Son of God (pp. 1-6). He says that "in the Gospels as they now stand the identification is made and therefore that the Evangelists themselves understood the Son of Man to be the Son of God and intended to present their unity" (p. 1). The clearest identification is given in John 5:25-27. Cf. also Seyoon Kim, "Jesus--The Son of God, the Stone, the Son of Man, and the Servant," in Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament, pp. 134-48.

<sup>4</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Son," by I. H. Marshall, 3 (1978):642.

<sup>5</sup>A. M. Hunter, "Crux Criticorum--Matt. XI. 25-30--A Re-appraisal," NTS 8 (1962):241.



most important seat of the testimony Jesus bears to his sonship."<sup>1</sup>

The language of this statement springs directly from Jesus' experience of God as His Father.<sup>2</sup> Bacon says that "no passage of the Synoptic Gospels throws so much light upon Jesus' sense of his own mission as that which deals with Knowing the Father and Being Known of Him in Mt. 11:25-27, Lk. 10:21-22." Since the passage belongs to what is common to Matthew and Luke but not included in Mark, he says, its claims to authenticity are "unexcelled."<sup>3</sup>

However, some do not agree with this positive assessment. Vermes thinks the passage is "discrepant" in tone and content from the "normal" sayings of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Beare concludes that Jesus never speaks of Himself absolutely as "the Son," and thus "the entire passage should be regarded as a later construction of Christological speculation, not as an utterance of Jesus himself."<sup>5</sup> Fuller too believes that the passage

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<sup>1</sup>Vos, p. 142. For his analysis of the passage, see pp. 142-60. Taylor says that the question of the historical basis of Jesus' sonship in His own thought depends most on this passage (The Names of Jesus, p. 60). A. Lukyn Williams says that this passage is "the highest of all those that contribute to the presentation of the Divine nature of Jesus, the Messiah" in the Gospel of Matthew (The Hebrew-Christian Messiah, p. 325).

<sup>2</sup>Greehey and Vellanickal, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin W. Bacon, "Jesus the Son of God," HThR 2 (1909):277. For an older but extensive discussion of Matt. 11:27 and its relationship to the rest of the New Testament, see pp. 277-309. Cf. also Bieneck, pp. 75-87; Goppelt, 1:203-4; Jeremias, The Central Message, pp. 23-27.

<sup>4</sup>Vermes, p. 210.

<sup>5</sup>Francis W. Beare, The Gospel According to Matthew, p. 267. He traces verse 27 to incipient Gnosticism (p. 266). Schreiber also believes that Jesus is here depicted as a Gnostic revealer (Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, s.v. "Sohn Gottes," by J. Schreiber, 6 [1962]:120). Jacobson calls Matthew 11:24-27 "a later addition to Q"

is not directly from Jesus, but notes nevertheless that it is an indirect witness to Jesus' self-understanding—a "church-formation representing a bridge between the synoptic Jesus and the Jesus of the fourth gospel."<sup>1</sup>

The authenticity of the passage, however, is supported by such scholars as Dalman, Bieneck, Van Iersel, Cullmann, Taylor, and Catchpole.<sup>2</sup> Taylor has no doubt that the saying was part of Q and existed substantially as given in Matthew.<sup>3</sup> Parallels in Jewish Wisdom

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and "a reinterpretation of the failure of the mission of the early church due to Israel's unbelief" (Arland Dean Jacobson, "Wisdom Christology in Q" [Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1978], p. 142). He says the passage argues that Wisdom is really accessible only to God, and since in Judaism Wisdom's intimate knowledge of God is unparalleled (cf. Prov. 8:22-24; Wis. Sol. 8:4), here Jesus is shown to be the only one to know God truly—the sole Mediator of the knowledge of God—like the "unknown Father" of Gnosticism (pp. 142-43).

<sup>1</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology, p. 115. He concludes that it is probably a creation of the very early church. Jesus, he says, "asserted no explicit Messianic claim and displayed no direct Messianic consciousness." There is "no indubitably authentic logion in which Jesus calls himself the 'Son.'" For a more helpful analysis of the entire passage (11:25-30), see Fuller's earlier work, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, pp. 89-95. Here Fuller concluded that Matt. 11:27 is probably authentic (p. 94). He says that "while Jesus did not 'claim' to be the Son of God, his words presume the knowledge that he was the Son of God in the sense that he existed in a unique relationship with the Father which found its pattern in the Sonship of Israel in the Old Testament" (p. 95). God's choice and care are involved, with the Son's response of obedience in fulfillment of the Servant role presented in Isaiah (p. 95).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dalman, pp. 193-94; Bieneck, pp. 75-87; Van Iersel, pp. 146-61; Cullmann, pp. 286-87; Taylor, Names, p. 64; David R. Catchpole, The Trial of Jesus, SP-B, pp. 145-47.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, Names, p. 61. Filson notes that the passage appears in two Synoptic Gospels and in Q (Floyd V. Filson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 141). He discounts the closeness of supposed parallels with Sirach 51. For an older argument that Matthew 11:25-30 has a Hellenistic background, see Martin Rist, "Is Matt. 11:25-30 a Primitive Baptismal Hymn?" JR 15 (1935):63-77.

literature make earlier arguments against authenticity on the basis of alleged Hellenistic Gnostic language invalid. The passage reveals Jesus' mediation of His knowledge of God as Abba to others (which is also assumed in the "Lord's Prayer" and later in Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6). Even if the definite articles with "the Son" and "the Father" are understood as generic, Jesus must still be understood as speaking of His own unique sonship.<sup>1</sup>

As Manson notes, "The passage is full of Semitic turns of phrase, and certainly Palestinian in origin. There is no good reason for doubting its authenticity."<sup>2</sup> Davies supports the authenticity of the passage because of its Semitic language, its Hebraic thought, and the fact that it occurs in Q.<sup>3</sup> One of the most complete studies to date on the background of Matthew 11:25-30 is that of Jack Suggs, in which he concludes that Matthew has taken a tradition that saw Jesus as Wisdom's finest representative and proceeded to identify Jesus instead with Wisdom itself (though he united it with a passion-oriented gospel).<sup>4</sup> However, the emphasis in Matthew 11:27 is clearly on the unique sonship of Jesus. The evidence simply does not support the view that Jesus (or

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<sup>1</sup>Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology," p. 251.

<sup>2</sup>T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus, p. 79; cf. idem, Teaching, pp. 109-12.

<sup>3</sup>W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, p. 157. He points out similarities with Sirach 51 (p. 156). On rabbinic use of the words of verse 27, cf. D. Adolf Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthäus, pp. 384-85.

<sup>4</sup>M. Jack Suggs, Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel, pp. 71-97.

Matthew) merely presents a Wisdom Christology.<sup>1</sup>

The Semitic nature of Matthew 11:27 is seen in its use of parallel clauses to express a reciprocal relationship (since the Semitic languages lack a reciprocal pronoun for "one another").<sup>2</sup> According to Marshall, the background may be Jewish wisdom teaching (cf. Sirach 1:1-10; Baruch 3:27-28; Wisdom of Solomon 8:3-4), which is based on the Old Testament (cf. Exod. 33:12-13; Job 28:25-28; Prov. 8:22-30). Jesus claims a unique status, since He bases His right to be the Mediator of the knowledge of God to men on the exclusive relationship that a son has with his father.<sup>3</sup>

In Dunn's view the original form of the saying is most closely paralleled by Israel's claim to election by God (cf. Exod. 4:22; Hos. 11:1). This was individualized to refer to the righteous Israelite in the Wisdom of Solomon 2:13-16. He believes that in Matthew 11:27 Jesus is seen as the One who represents Israel in the last days. The passage gives in summary or formal terms the kind of claim that Jesus made both implicitly and explicitly elsewhere. Its background is thus Jesus' own claim to a unique intimacy with God.<sup>4</sup>

O'Neill argues that the Lucan variant, "No one knows who is the

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<sup>1</sup>Davies, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "Son," p. 640.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 641. He notes that this fits well other references by Jesus to God as His Father. Hahn says that Matt. 11:25-26 has parallels in late Jewish tradition (e.g., Qumran), that it was originally in Aramaic, and that it was present in the early Palestinian church (p. 309). He notes that in 11:27a Jesus makes a statement concerning Himself, but in vv. 27b and 27c His statements are in the third person.

<sup>4</sup>Dunn, pp. 199-200.

Father save the Son," is original, and that in Matthew 11:27 the saying originally read, "No one knows that Father save the Son and him to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." This means, he says, that "if no one knows the Son save the Father, no one should presume to say that he was the Son, the Messiah." Therefore even His followers should not speak openly about Him until God had enthroned Him. Anyone who claimed openly to be the Messiah was therefore guilty of blasphemy (usurping God's right) and was worthy of death (cf. Matt. 26:65-66).<sup>1</sup>

However, the majority of exegetes regard the Matthean version as the more original.<sup>2</sup> The passage may be founded on the Old Testament idea of knowledge as an intimate communion of insight and love.<sup>3</sup> The Qumran literature shows that Jewish concepts of knowledge emphasized personal intimacy.<sup>4</sup> Van Iersel shows divergences from Hellenistic and Johannine parallels,<sup>5</sup> and Jeremias notes that 11:27 is totally Semitic in form and style.<sup>6</sup>

But earlier traditions are insufficient to explain the existence of the saying. Here "the Father and the Son are equally mysterious,

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<sup>1</sup>J. C. O'Neill, "The Charge of Blasphemy at Jesus' Trial before the Sanhedrin," in The Trial of Jesus, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Manson, Teaching, p. 111.

<sup>4</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 288.

<sup>5</sup>Van Iersel, pp. 146-61. For an analysis of the Johannine parallels, cf. Grundmann, "Matth. XI. 27 und die Johanneischen 'Der Vater—Der Sohn'-Stellen," pp. 42-49. Hunter notes that parallels in John prove nothing, since John depends on the Synoptics or on an independent tradition ("Crux Criticorum—Matt. XI. 25-30—A Re-appraisal," p. 245).

<sup>6</sup>Jeremias, Abba, pp. 47-54.

each existing and known only in relation to the other."<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is on the unique position of the Son. The Son knows the Father and promotes His acknowledgment in the world.<sup>2</sup> That Jesus might have called Himself "the Son" in this sense is shown by parallels in Mark 12:6 and 13:32.<sup>3</sup>

Matthew 11:25-30 is a psalm-like hymn, with three parts: (1) 11:25-26; (2) 11:27; and (3) 11:28-30. Verses 28-30 further develop the contents of the first two sections.<sup>4</sup> Michel analyzes the passage as a thanksgiving prayer consisting of praise, a word of revelation, and an invitation. There are "four skilfully constructed clauses."<sup>5</sup> The first clause ("I thank you, Father . . .") is normative for what follows. The special understanding of the Father and the Son is fulfilled in the

<sup>1</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 292.

<sup>2</sup>Schweizer, p. 373. According to Michel, Jesus' self-designation as "Son" involves election, knowledge, and revelation. "It is a problem how this fundamental statement is related to the references to Ps. 2:7 in Mk. 1:11; 9:7 (cf. Lk. 3:22)" (p. 639). Schweizer says that Matt. 11:27 is rooted in "the apocalyptic idea of the election and acknowledgment of the Son to whom the Father gives all power" (cf. Matt. 28:18) (p. 373).

<sup>3</sup>Hunter, "Crux Criticorum—Matt. XI. 25-30—A Re-appraisal," p. 244.

<sup>4</sup>Schrenk, p. 993. The first and third parts are clearly Semitic (cf. Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 159), though the second (11:27) is disputed. Bultmann says that 11:28-30 is "a quotation from Jewish Wisdom literature put into the mouth of Jesus" (p. 160). Parallels can be found in Prov. 1:20-22; 8:1-3; Sirach 24:19-21; 51:23-25. Those in favor of Hellenistic Gnosticism as a background for Matt. 11:27 include Wilhelm Bousset (Kyrios Christos, pp. 84-89) and Bultmann (History, pp. 159-60). Hunter says that most recent scholars hold that Matt. 11:28-30 is genuine, and notes that it has echoes from Sirach 51:23-27; Isa. 42; 53; and Jer. 6:16 ("Crux Criticorum—Matt. XI. 25-30—A Re-appraisal," p. 248).

<sup>5</sup>Michel, p. 640.

transmission of the revelation.<sup>1</sup> Jesus says that the Father has given the Son a full revelation, and only the Son can mediate this knowledge to others.<sup>2</sup> In verse 25 Jesus thanks His Father that "You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes."<sup>3</sup> If the reference to "these things" is to the secret of Jesus' unique sonship, as Bieneck suggests,<sup>4</sup> this would provide a strong connection between verses 25-26 and verse 27.

The first clause of verse 27 provides the theme: "My Father has given me all things." As Jeremias puts it, Jesus says, "God has given me a full revelation."<sup>5</sup> Hunter believes that the phrase "all things" refers to all knowledge—all necessary revelation. He paraphrases, "All I need to know for my task has been taught me by the Father."<sup>6</sup> But the Son not only has knowledge but also the authority to choose those to whom He wishes to reveal God.<sup>7</sup>

Jeremias translates the next two clauses as a picture from

<sup>1</sup>Ibid. The knowledge mentioned is "neither speculative nor mystic."

<sup>2</sup>Parallels can be found in Dan. 2:20-23; Ethiopic Enoch 37:4; 3 Enoch 48C:7; 1QS 11:15-20; John 10:15.

<sup>3</sup>God Himself has hidden "these things" (cf. Josef Blank, "Die Sendung des Sohnes," in Neues Testament und Kirche, p. 30).

<sup>4</sup>Bieneck, p. 85. Blank takes "these things" to refer to the entire contents of the preaching of Jesus, and not at all to the "all things" of verse 27 (p. 30).

<sup>5</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 49. Jeremias changes the passive to active, since the passive is a periphrasis for the action of God.

<sup>6</sup>Hunter, "Crux Criticorum—Matt. XI. 25-30," p. 246.

<sup>7</sup>D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 8:277; cf. Polag, pp. 160-61.

everyday life: "Just as only a father really knows his son, so only a son really knows his father" (cf. John 10:15). The verse then ends by continuing the revelational imagery: "because only a son really knows his father, he alone is in a position to pass this knowledge on to others" (cf. John 5:19-20; 3 Enoch 48C:7).<sup>1</sup> Since Semitic languages lack a reciprocal pronoun, they use periphrasis or verbal repetition to express a reciprocal relationship. Jeremias thinks that the statement, "no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son," is an Oriental periphrasis for a mutual relationship ("only father and son really know each other").<sup>2</sup> He believes that the use of the definite articles with Father and Son should be understood in a generic sense as a statement of general experience. This is similar to John 5:19-20, and according to this view it was originally a common metaphor of the son as one who learns from his father.<sup>3</sup> Bauckham notes that this view conforms to Jesus' normal teaching style, which often uses the analogy of human relationships to explain truths dealing with God's relationship with man (cf. Matt. 7:9-11; Luke 15).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48. The statement that this passage "gives the impression of a thunderbolt fallen from the Johannine sky" was coined in 1876 by Karl Hase (Geschichte Jesu, p. 422). The Johannine similarities include the following: the use of "the Father" as a title for God, the designation of Jesus as "the Son" (fifteen occurrences in John and eight in his epistles; however, it is also found at Matt. 24:36; 28:19; 1 Cor. 15:28; Heb. 1:8), Jesus' self-witness, the secret of His nature, the mutual knowledge between Father and Son, the theme of revelation, and the clause "all things have been delivered" (cf. John 3:35; 13:3; 17:2); cf. Schrenk, p. 993; Jeremias, Prayers, p. 45; Manson, Sayings, p. 79; idem, Teaching, pp. 109-12.

<sup>4</sup>Bauckham, "Sonship," pp. 251-52. John A. T. Robinson agrees



Jesus was thus conscious of being the recipient and mediator of the knowledge of God in a unique way (cf. Matt. 5:17; 11:25; Mark 4:11; Luke 10:23-24; 15:1-32).<sup>1</sup> A number of scholars, however, argue against a generic use of "son" and "father" in Matthew 11:27. Gundry presents three lines of evidence: (1) the preceding address to God as "Father" (vv. 25-26); (2) the reference to God as "my Father" (v. 27a); and (3) the final reference in verse 27 to Jesus as "the Son" who wishes to reveal what He has received from the Father.<sup>2</sup> Schweizer rightly says that the saying is not convincing as a realistic parable, since even at the time of Jesus men were better known to their wives and friends than to their fathers. In addition the introduction and the concluding clause do not speak of the "son" in metaphorical terms.<sup>3</sup>

But even if the father-son relationship in 11:27 is a metaphor, it is clear that the term "a father" refers to God and Jesus is applying "a son" to Himself, so that He is still making an extraordinary claim to

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with Jeremias that "the son" and "the father" are parabolic or generic and should be translated "a son" and "a father" (The Human Face of God, p. 186). He adds, "The saying is a parable drawn from the intimate knowledge that a father and a son alone have of each other, which Jesus is using to describe the abba relationship to God that he is claiming for himself." The Mishnah may provide a parallel. Onias the Circle-maker reportedly prayed, "O Lord of the world, thy children have turned their faces to me, for that I am like a son of the house before thee." Onias' intimacy with God is then compared to that of a son with his father, quoting Prov. 23:23 (Taanith 3. 8).

<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 51. Jeremias says that the aorist tense ("have been given") indicates that the revelation was given to Jesus in one particular experience, perhaps at His baptism (p. 52), but this is not a necessary idea of the aorist.

<sup>2</sup>Robert H. Gundry, Matthew, p. 217 (cf. pp. 215-20).

<sup>3</sup>Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew, p. 271.

a unique relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> Thus "son" here "is at least a description of his relation to God,"<sup>2</sup> a relationship of "intimacy and familiarity."<sup>3</sup> Jesus says that His competence is grounded in "an exclusive and reciprocal relationship between the Father and himself, the Son."<sup>4</sup> The knowledge involved is a personal "I-thou" relationship "initiated and sustained by the Father, and complemented and fulfilled by Jesus' own filial response of obedience and love." The Son knows the Father with the same knowledge that the Father has of Him. "He is the Son who alone knows the Father, and he is the mediator through whom alone this saving revelation of the Father comes to men" (cf. John 14:6).<sup>5</sup>

William Manson says that "the special knowledge which makes the teaching of Jesus a revelation of God is expressly grounded upon the filiality of his consciousness in relation to God, and this is a unique relation."<sup>6</sup> The knowledge of God to which Jesus refers is more than

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<sup>1</sup>William G. Most, The Consciousness of Christ, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, Origins, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Commission Biblique Pontificale, pp. 92-93. Greehey and Vellanickal note that Jesus is here speaking as the unique beneficiary of a relationship with God which makes Him the unique voice of divine wisdom. "Sa connaissance de Dieu est unique. Il connaît Dieu comme personne ne l'a jamais connu. La relation mutuelle qu'il expérimente avec Dieu est sans parallèle" (p. 186).

<sup>4</sup>Hunter, "Crux Criticorum--Matt. XI. 25-30--A Re-appraisal," p. 246.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, p. 106. Richardson says that the biblical sense of knowledge used here means that the Father commissions the Son, sends Him, works through Him, and has a close personal relationship with Him (p. 44). "The Son alone knows the Father, as no other man does, since no one else has offered the perfect

just a filial consciousness, however. Jesus knows the Father just as the Father knows the Son. There is a mutual and exclusive knowledge between Father and Son.<sup>1</sup> The knowledge that the Father has of Jesus is immediate, not acquired. Jesus knows the Father in the same sense. His knowledge of the Father is grounded in the fact that He is the Son. This is a unique relationship and distinct from all human knowledge. As Ladd states, "Christ as the Son possesses the same innate, exclusive knowledge of God that God as the Father possesses of him."<sup>2</sup> God has given Jesus the mission of mediating to men this knowledge of God, and man can know God intimately only through revelation by the Son. In this sense the Son is sovereign in revealing the Father. This mediated knowledge is not identical with the Son's knowledge of the Father, since the latter is the same as the Father's knowledge of the Son. It is therefore equal to divine knowledge and thus quite unique. Jesus' sonship is equally divine and thus also unique.<sup>3</sup> Jesus here claims an exclusive knowledge of the Father and an exclusive right to reveal the Father, involving "nothing less than an absolutely unique self-

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obedience of a son to the Father." The Son is "the divinely appointed means of bringing the knowledge of God to the world. . . . The saying implies that, apart from Christ's revelation of God, there is no true knowledge of God in the world." Richardson also notes that knowledge here means knowledge by personal relationship with God.

<sup>1</sup>Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthäus, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup>George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 166-67. The sonship that believers have through the Son is likewise mediated through Jesus. Ladd notes that messiahship and sonship are thus not synonymous. "Sonship precedes messiahship and is in fact the ground for the messianic mission. . . . sonship involves something more than a filial consciousness; it involves a unique and exclusive relationship between God and Jesus" (p. 167).

consciousness, on an equality with that of the Father."<sup>1</sup>

The two clauses referring to the knowledge of the Son by the Father and of the Father by the Son must be taken together, as expressing not only intimate mutual understanding, but also its thoroughness and infallibility.<sup>2</sup> The terms relating to the knowledge of the Father indicate that there is total unity of will between the Father and the Son.<sup>3</sup> Further, the unique role of Jesus in God's plan of salvation is based in His unique relationship with God the Father.<sup>4</sup>

In Matthew 11:27, as in Luke 10:22,<sup>5</sup> the phrase "my Father" stands in a very close relationship with the terms "the Son" and "the Father" used absolutely. The possessive pronoun shows that the relationship between Son and Father consists of a "strong mutual involvement."<sup>6</sup>

Kee argues that Jesus' knowledge here is "insight into God's eschatological purpose, . . . revelatory knowledge of the divine intention for the world."<sup>7</sup> There is, however, no reference to

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<sup>1</sup>Ned B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup>Dalman, p. 283.

<sup>3</sup>Jack D. Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of God' in Matthew's Gospel," BIbB 5 (1975):21.

<sup>4</sup>Jack D. Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Schlatter's ambiguous interpretation of the exclusive knowledge of Father and Son in Luke 10:22 (D. Adolf Schlatter, Das Evangelium des Lukas, p. 503).

<sup>6</sup>Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy: Luke II. 41-51a," p. 352.

<sup>7</sup>Howard C. Kee, Jesus in History, pp. 105-6.

eschatology in this paragraph; Jesus is saying that in the present the being of the Son is known to God alone, and that in the present only the Son knows the Father. This is a claim to present sonship in its fullest sense.<sup>1</sup>

This saying simply expresses clearly what the rest of the Father-Son language of the Synoptics implies.<sup>2</sup> Cullmann admits that Matthew 11:27 may even indicate Jesus' consciousness of preexistence.<sup>3</sup> It also supplies a basis for the statement in John 5:18 that Jesus had claimed "that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."<sup>4</sup>

Matthew 17:25-26. When Peter is questioned whether Jesus pays the two-drachma temple tax (17:24), Jesus uses a parable to remind Peter that royal sons do not normally pay taxes to their own fathers (vv. 25-26). In other words, since Jesus is uniquely God's Son, He is exempt from the temple obligation.<sup>5</sup> Jesus here separates Himself from all Israelites as belonging more to God than to Israel. The implication is

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<sup>1</sup>Leon Morris, "The Emergence of the Doctrine of the Incarnation: a Review Article," Them 8 (September 1982):17.

<sup>2</sup>R. T. France, "The Worship of Jesus," in Christ the Lord, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Cullmann, p. 288. However, Weiss says, "In this saying is contained the very highest ascription of divinity to the earthly Jesus of which the early community was capable. There can be no doubt that he is here represented as the sole one among all the children of men who, as 'the Son,' can approach 'the Father.' . . . Yet exalted as is this office above that of all others, Jesus is still a man, though the most highly endowed by gifts of grace" (Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150, 1:120-21).

<sup>4</sup>A. W. Argyle, "The Evidence for the Belief that Our Lord Himself Claimed to Be Divine," ET 61 (1950):229. Argyle states that this implies the preexistence of Jesus in the bosom of the Father.

<sup>5</sup>Carson, "Matthew," EBC, p. 394.

that the heavenly King, God, will not require tribute from His own Son.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the coin is used to pay Peter's tax as well as that of Jesus does not imply that Peter is equal in sonship to Jesus, but rather that Jesus as Son is able to liberate His followers since they have a sonship that is derived from His. The focus of the passage is "supremely christological,"<sup>2</sup> especially since the original question from the tax collectors (v. 24) makes no mention of Peter.<sup>3</sup>

Matthew 21:37-38. All the Synoptic Gospels report the parable of the wicked husbandmen. Whether it is a parable or an allegory has been debated.<sup>4</sup> Van Iersel suggests that it originally had a parabolic form.<sup>5</sup> Jeremias appeals to a simplified version of the parable in the Gospel of Thomas to argue that the unity and realism of the story make it an authentic parable.<sup>6</sup> Cranfield claims that the story was allegorical from the beginning, with Jesus as the beloved (only) son.<sup>7</sup> Michel, on the other hand, thinks that the original parable was not

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<sup>1</sup>Dalman, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>Carson, "Matthew," EBC, p. 394.

<sup>3</sup>The nature of this sonship depends on whether Jesus includes Peter within His assertion of freedom from taxation. The plural "sons" in verse 25 arises from the illustration of earthly kings. Because the money that results from the miracle pays the tax for both Jesus and Peter, Vos erroneously concludes that here Jesus refers to His sonship in a purely religious (Old Testament) sense (Vos, pp. 160-61).

<sup>4</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," pp. 293-301.

<sup>5</sup>Van Iersel, pp. 124-45.

<sup>6</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 70-77.

<sup>7</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark, CGTC, p. 367.

allegorical. Its meaning, he says, lies in the "extreme crisis of the contemporary historical situation," since the commission of the servants in the story is not distinguished from that of the "beloved son."<sup>1</sup> Even as an allegory, however, the story corresponds to Jesus' attitude toward the Jewish leaders as indicated elsewhere, and many of Jesus' parables have numerous points of reference to outside reality.<sup>2</sup>

The parable shows that Jesus, as God's Son, is the final messenger of God to Israel, possessing His Father's authority in a way that far surpasses His predecessors (cf. Matt. 17:25-26; Luke 15:29; John 8:35).<sup>3</sup> The servants represent the prophets (cf. Matt. 23:34-39). The vineyard is God's kingdom program (cf. Matt. 21:43; Isa. 3:13-15; 5), and Israel's leaders (scribes, elders, and chief priests, to whom the parable is directed) are represented as tenants. Jesus claims to act as the Son in calling them to account.<sup>4</sup> The Son is the climax of God's revelation to Israel. "Jesus is the unique, cherished Son, sent

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<sup>1</sup>Michel, p. 641.

<sup>2</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 295. Jane and Raymond Newell suggest that the parable is "not a Christological parable, but rather a parable that attacks the methods of the first century Zealot movement" ("The Parable of the Wicked Tenants," *NT* 14 [1972]:226). Jesus did not refer to Himself when He spoke of the sending of the son (p. 230). This interpretation is almost totally without foundation, and is based only on a historical similarity to the goals and methods of Zealots.

<sup>3</sup>Bauckham, "Sonship," p. 252. On the authenticity of the parable, including its allegorical elements and the reference to the son, cf. Jeremias, *Parables*, pp. 70-77; Catchpole, p. 144; C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, pp. 93-98.

<sup>4</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," pp. 298-99; Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, pp. 250-52.

by the Father to the Father's people to do the Father's will."<sup>1</sup> As the heir (son), Jesus is above the servants (prophets) and has the same rights as the Father.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of the parable was clear to the Jewish rulers, and perhaps the high priest's question at the trial ("Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" [Mark 14:61]) was designed to force Jesus to identify Himself plainly as the son of the parable. In any case, "Jesus sees himself as God's representative revealing his will with authority."<sup>3</sup>

Fuller is among a number of scholars who suggest that the "son" in the parable is not a direct self-designation of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> He holds that "son" here represents an original "servant," so that "Jesus represents the culmination of the mission of the prophets and their rejection."<sup>5</sup> But this is carrying critical speculation too far. As Cullmann says, there is no reason to deny that Jesus here spoke of Himself as the Son.<sup>6</sup> According to Robinson it is "inconceivable" that Jesus did not intend the "son" in the parable to be taken to refer to

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards, p. 160. He suggests that the statement that the owner "had yet one" son (Mark 12:6) may imply Jesus' preexistence. Schweizer, however, says that this statement does not refer to the preexistence of the Son. He notes that the sending of the son is parallel to that of the servants, though it is the Lord's supreme effort. The context is one of suffering and death (Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 379).

<sup>2</sup>Vosté, "The Title 'Son of God' in the Synoptic Gospels," p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 300.

<sup>4</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 114. He states that the "son" in the parable stands for God's final eschatological mission to Israel.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>6</sup>Cullmann, p. 289.



Himself, "the story having no point unless in some sense it is a picture of God's dealings with Israel through the prophets and now through himself."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus often refers in the Synoptic Gospels to His being sent by God (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 4:18, 43; 9:48; 10:16).<sup>2</sup> In this parable Jesus sharply distinguishes the only "son" as the sole heir from all the servants (prophets). He is the "beloved son," recalling the statement of the Septuagint concerning Isaac in Genesis 22:2 ("your beloved son"). There is no difference between the "beloved Son" here and the "only-begotten Son" of John 3:16.<sup>3</sup> The one who is the only son has the right to claim the entire household property. In the case of the Son of God, the inheritance would be sovereignty over the world (cf. Ps. 2:8). "Beloved" is virtually equivalent to "unique" (cf. Mark 1:11; 9:7) and means that Jesus "stands out among all others who may be called sons as in a unique and unapproached sense the Son of God."<sup>4</sup>

The failure of the tenants is their refusal to accept the owner's messengers and the killing of his son, rather than any lack of care for the vineyard (cf. Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 7:21-28).<sup>5</sup> With the

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<sup>1</sup>Robinson, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup>Seyoon Kim, The Origin of Paul's Gospel, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Dalman, p. 281.

<sup>4</sup>Warfield, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>Carl R. Kazmierski, Jesus, the Son of God, p. 133. Blank suggests that these three passages serve as background for the parable: Psalm 118:22-23 (the stone); Isaiah 5:1-7 (the vineyard); and Jeremiah 7:21-28 (the prophets) (pp. 14-18).

citation of Psalm 118:26 by way of application, the parable becomes even more clearly Christologically motivated. The owner clearly represents God,<sup>1</sup> and the sending of the son is intentional. He is killed precisely because he is the son (heir). The citation from Psalm 118 shows that God will reverse the act of rejection by the tenants so that the rejected son becomes the chief cornerstone. The Christological motif (Jesus is the Son of God) is dominant and provides the reason for the severity of the judgment.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the parable presupposes the coming death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Matthew 22:41-45. When Jesus asks the Pharisees about the meaning of Psalm 110:1 in regard to the Messiah as the son of David, His aim is to arouse reflection concerning the descent of the Messiah. The desired conclusion is that "the Messiah is in reality the Son of One more exalted than David, that is, the Son of God."<sup>4</sup> The point is that the Messiah must be more than merely David's son, since David calls him

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<sup>1</sup>Werner G. Kümmel, Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte, 2 vols., 1:209.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>Kazmierski, pp. 134-35. Because of this Blank and Kümmel believe that the parable is probably a post-Easter creation of the Christian community, though it may reflect an old and very early understanding of Jesus as God's Son (Blank, pp. 21-22; Kümmel, Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte, 1:216-17). A Hellenistic influence, however, is still unproven (idem, p. 39). Matthew Black calls it the Parable of the Rejected Son, since it is followed by Christological "stone testimonia" (in Q) from Daniel 2:34-35; 7:13, which the Gospel writers interpreted as the Son or Son of Man ("The Christological Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," NIS 18 [1971]:13-14). This, he says, is one source of the Son of God Christology in the New Testament (p. 14).

<sup>4</sup>Dalman, p. 286. However, Dalman interprets this as referring to God's creating Jesus in a special way in the womb of His mother.

Lord; he must be God's Son.<sup>1</sup> As God's Son the Messiah will sit at God's right hand with universal sovereignty. The Messiah must therefore be a supernatural being who is both a descendant of David and the coming Judge of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Matthew 28:19. Most critical scholars appear to reject the ending of Matthew's Gospel as being redactional, not authentic or even traditional.<sup>3</sup> Vermes, for example, discounts the "Trinitarian formula" in Matthew 28:19 as "representative of the latest stage of the doctrinal evolution."<sup>4</sup>

However, in Matthew the titles "My Son," "the Son," and "Son of God" (8:29) are variants of the more comprehensive title "the Son of God." The "Immanuel" passage in 1:23 has an affinity to 28:20b, and thus shows how Matthew understood the title Son of God.<sup>5</sup> Thus with respect to the title the end of Matthew corresponds to the beginning. The fact that Jesus here gives a "Trinitarian" statement should not be

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<sup>1</sup>Ben M. Elrod, "The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus as the Key to an Understanding of His Messianic Consciousness" (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1961), pp. 103-4.

<sup>2</sup>Ladd, pp. 167-68; cf. Christoph Burger, Jesus als Davidsohn, FRLANT, pp. 87-90; Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthäus, p. 659; Edward A. McDowell, Son of Man and Suffering Servant, p. 173; Brian M. Nolan, The Royal Son of God, OBO, p. 223, who suggests that Jesus was implying that the Messiah is the Son of David precisely because He is the Son of God.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Jack D. Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," JBL 93 (1974):580.

<sup>4</sup>Vermes, p. 200.

<sup>5</sup>Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," pp. 580-81.

considered novel.<sup>1</sup> Trinitarian ideas are also found in the resurrection accounts in Luke and John.<sup>2</sup> What is clear in this passage is that Jesus as the Son claims to have the same universal and eternal authority as the Father,<sup>3</sup> and to possess equality with the Father and the Spirit as an object of worship and commitment.<sup>4</sup>

### In Mark

A major purpose of Mark's Gospel is "to prove that Jesus is the Son of God."<sup>5</sup> For Mark the title Son of God is the highest title that can be given to Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Each use of the title in Mark occurs at a decisive point in Mark's story: in the prologue (1:1), at the baptism

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<sup>1</sup>Other passages containing references to the Father (or God), the Son (or Christ), and the Spirit include Matt. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; Rev. 1:4-6.

<sup>2</sup>Carson, "Matthew," EBC, p. 598.

<sup>3</sup>Vosté, "The Title 'Son of God' in the Synoptic Gospels," p. 25. There may be an allusion to Daniel 7:14 in verse 18, where Jesus as God's Son is given "all authority in heaven and on earth," thus highlighting the close relationship between Jesus' titles "Son of God" and "Son of Man" (Kim, Son of Man, pp. 100-101).

<sup>4</sup>According to Schlatter the use of the absolute "the Son" in conjunction with the absolute "the Father" represents a close and virtually equal association (Der Evangelist Matthäus, p. 799).

<sup>5</sup>Francis D. Pansini, "Our First Gospel" (Th.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1946), p. 85; cf. Eduard Schweizer, Neues Testament und Christologie, pp. 86-103. Mark reports that Jesus is the Son of God in 1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:61; 15:39.

<sup>6</sup>Wolfgang Feneberg, Der Markusprolog, p. 156; Ernest Best, The Temptation and the Passion, p. 17. Taylor remarks that "St. Mark's highest claim for Jesus is that He is 'the Son of God'" (Person of Christ, p. 7). Cf. also Paul J. Achtemeier, Mark, PC, pp. 44, 48; Howard C. Kee, Community of the New Age, pp. 121-24; idem, Jesus in History, pp. 150-2; Werner H. Kelber, "Conclusion: From Passion Narrative to Gospel," in The Passion in Mark, pp. 160-68; J. R. Richards, Jesus--Son of God and Son of Man, passim; Warfield, pp. 19-23, 42-45.

(1:11) and Transfiguration (9:7), in Jesus' encounters with demons (3:11; 5:7), in His eschatological discourse (13:32), at His trial (14:61), and during His crucifixion (15:39). Five of the occurrences are connected with supernatural phenomena. In Mark the title designates Jesus' unique relationship with the Father and His possession of the authority and power of God.<sup>1</sup> Mark thus relates the title to every part of Jesus' ministry and identity.<sup>2</sup>

Mark apparently prefers the title Son of God over Son of Man as a designation for Jesus. He uses Son of God in his title (1:1), and concludes with the confession of a Gentile, "Truly, this man was the Son of God" (15:39). In Mark Jesus uses the title Son of Man fourteen times, but never once does Mark himself designate Jesus as Son of Man. Mark thus reports Jesus' use of the term, but does not adopt it himself.<sup>3</sup> Instead Mark focuses on the revelation of Jesus as God's unique and divine Son.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James R. Edwards, "The Son of God: Its Antecedents in Judaism and Hellenism and Its Use in the Earliest Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup>Best, pp. 167-73. For a redactional study of the entire Gospel of Mark, see Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*. For a redactional view of Marcan Christology, see Norman Perrin, "The Christology of Mark: A Study in Methodology," *JR* 51 (1971):173-87. Perrin notes that every occurrence of the title Son of God in Mark is significant (p. 182).

<sup>3</sup>Matthew and Luke also restrict the use of "Son of Man" to the sayings of Jesus. However, Mark connects the titles "Son of Man" and "Son of God" in 8:38 (cf. the string of Christological titles in 8:27-9:12) and 14:61-62 (cf. also 2:7-10; 9:31; 13:26-27; 15:39). That Jesus Himself saw various messianic titles as interconnected is seen from His reference to the "Son of Man" in 9:12 with allusion to the "Servant" prophecy of Isaiah 53 ("suffer many things and be treated with contempt"); cf. Kim, *Son of Man*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup>Edwards, pp. 178-79. For Mark Jesus is God's "beloved" (only) Son. According to Chronis the principal significance of the title in

The title Son of God clearly "represents the most fundamental element in Mark's Christology."<sup>1</sup> He understands the title in a "supernatural and metaphysical sense."<sup>2</sup> As Taylor says, "The Marcan Son of God is a Divine Being who appears in human form. . . . Jesus is by nature the Son of God."<sup>3</sup> However, Mark also understands divine sonship in terms of obedience.<sup>4</sup> The heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism links His sonship with His identity as the suffering Servant (Isa. 42:1).<sup>5</sup>

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Mark is to designate Jesus as divine (Harry L. Chronis, "The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39," *JBL* 101 [1982]:102-6).

<sup>1</sup>Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 120. As Vielhauer puts it, the title is at the heart of Marcan redaction (p. 202).

<sup>2</sup>Wrede, p. 75. Wrede contends that Mark must mean the same thing by the title Son of God throughout his Gospel that he means in the story of the baptism (1:11)--that Jesus is a supernatural being through the reception of the Spirit. This, he says, is proven by two passages: the trial before the high priest (14:62) and the confession of the centurion (15:39) (p. 74).

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, *Mark*, p. 121. Perrin, however, divides the Marcan references to God's Son into three groups: (1) confessional uses (1:1; 14:61; 15:39); (2) testimonies to Jesus (1:11; 3:11; 9:7); and (3) exorcism recognition statements (1:24; 5:7). He concludes that the use of the title in a confessional sense is a specifically Christian use, so that Mark makes both the high priest and the Roman centurion use it as a Christological title (Norman Perrin, "The High Priest's Question and Jesus' Answer," in *The Passion in Mark*, pp. 86-88).

<sup>4</sup>Hay, "Son-of-God Christology," p. 108. Hay claims that Jesus' sonship actually consists in His obedience to the Father (p. 113). Jesus puts Himself on a level with all others who do the will of God (Mark 3:31-35). "Jesus is the one son who is radically obedient to the Father's will" (p. 110).

<sup>5</sup>Hay, "Son-of-God Christology," p. 109. Hay says that Mark considers "Son of God" to be a title of the risen and glorified Christ while at the same time using it paradoxically as a title of humiliation (cf. 12:1-9; 13:32; 15:39) (p. 108). Johannes Weiss states, "The Jesus of Mark is the Son of God, who is endowed with divine power and divine knowledge, but he is also the one-time Jewish teacher and prophet with human feeling and limited understanding and power; godhead and manhood interpenetrate one another in an indissoluble unity" (*Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30-150*, 2 vols., 2:697).

A principal concern in Mark's presentation of Jesus as the Son of God is to emphasize the connection between Jesus' sonship and His death.<sup>1</sup> According to Kingsbury, Mark "shrouds his identity as the Son of God in a veil of secrecy" because "he wants to show that the identity of Jesus as the royal Son of God is inextricably bound up with his destiny, that is, with his obedient willingness to go the way of the cross (cf. 14:35-36)."<sup>2</sup> At first, says Kingsbury, only such transcendent beings as God and the demons know that Jesus is the Son of God (1:11, 24, 34; 3:11). But various people also ask who Jesus is (1:27; 4:41; 6:3). Possible answers are given (6:14-16), all false. When Jesus asks the disciples who they think He is, Peter gives only a partial answer ("You are the Messiah," 8:29; cf. 1:1). At the Transfiguration the disciples are told of Jesus' divine sonship (9:7). But Mark notes that the disciples will not really comprehend this information until after the resurrection (9:9-10; 14:28; 16:7). Jesus heals Bartimaeus and rides into Jerusalem as the "Son of David" (10:47-48; 11:9-10), but this Son of David is Himself superior to David (12:35-37). The secret of Jesus' divine sonship begins to be disclosed at His trial (14:62-62), yet the Sanhedrin calls it "blasphemy" (14:64). It finally surfaces at His death (15:39; cf. the anticipation in 12:6-9) and resurrection. Thus "at the end of his story Mark discloses the secret of Jesus' divine sonship."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dunn, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?" Interp 35 (1981):253.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-55.

Mark shows that to confess Jesus as the Son of God (1:1) is to confess Him as the One appointed by God to die on the cross (15:39).<sup>1</sup> Mark maintains a distinction between the titles Son of God and Son of Man in that Jesus is never confessed or addressed as the Son of Man in Mark, though He calls Himself the Son of Man in both public and private teaching. In Mark 8:38, however, Jesus speaks of the Son of Man as coming in the glory "of His Father."<sup>2</sup>

Martin believes that Mark uses Son of God in an Old Testament sense denoting "a special agent, chosen and invested with a mission, offering obedience even to the point of suffering and humiliation, and vindicated at length by God." He adds, however, that Jesus obeyed because He was the Son of God, not vice versa.<sup>3</sup> As Schweizer admits, Mark does not take the title so functionally that he equates divine sonship with Christ's institution to the office. By the time of Jesus' death and the centurion's confession, Jesus has already been proclaimed Son of God by God and the demons.<sup>4</sup> The "messianic secret" in Mark means that "Mark gives stories of mighty acts but has Jesus forbid their proclamation before the passion because only in light of this could they be understood as signs of divine sonship which have nothing to do with magic."<sup>5</sup> In fact the "messianic secret" in Mark is really a "Son of God

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<sup>1</sup>Hans-Jorg Steichele, Der leidende Sohn Gottes, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup>Kingsbury, "Divine Man," pp. 256-57. Cf. also Mark 13:32.

<sup>3</sup>Ralph Martin, Mark: Evangelist and Theologian, p. 106, n. 49. On the title in Mark, see also pp. 98-106, 126-31.

<sup>4</sup>Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 379, n. 324.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 379, n. 326.



secret."<sup>1</sup>

Recently some scholars have claimed to detect a "divine man" Christological influence in Mark. Weeden says that Mark attempted to counteract a "divine man" Christology by emphasizing Jesus' suffering. In Mark Jesus repeatedly rebukes the disciples for their concentration on power and victory (cf. 8:29-33).<sup>2</sup> However, there is no real evidence that Jesus was ever proclaimed simply as a miracle-worker or "divine man."<sup>3</sup> Tiede shows that the "divine man" idea was not a fixed concept in Hellenism,<sup>4</sup> and Bieneck argues that the concept is not a valid background for the title Son of God in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>5</sup> Much of the "divine man" discussion has been based on material amassed by Wetter and Bieler,<sup>6</sup> but almost all their sources are late.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, s.v. "Sohn Gottes," by J. Schreiber, 6 (1962):120. According to Kingsbury Mark associates secrecy and identity more with "Son of God" than with any other title (Jack D. Kingsbury, The Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 14). On the messianic secret in Mark cf. *ibid.*, pp. 2-23; Räisänen, pp. 90-158.

<sup>2</sup>Theodore J. Weeden, Mark--Traditions in Conflict, pp. 52-69. For a critique of Weeden's approach, see William L. Lane, "Theios Anēr Christology and the Gospel of Mark," in New Dimensions in New Testament Study, pp. 149-61.

<sup>3</sup>Moule, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup>David L. Tiede, The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker, SBLDS, pp. 4-13. Schillebeeckx, while not denying a divine man motif, says that it would be better to speak of a "prophetic-sapiential messianism" in which some divine miracle-worker traits are present (p. 427).

<sup>5</sup>Bieneck, pp. 70-74.

<sup>6</sup>Gillis P. Wetter, Der Sohn Gottes, pp. 4-101; Ludwig Bieler, ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, pp. 31-32. In Schweizer's view the model for Jesus as a miracle-worker was the Old Testament story of Elijah and Elisha rather than a Hellenistic divine man (Neues Testament und Christologie, p. 89).

Otto Betz also argues against the existence of a "divine man" Christology in Mark.<sup>1</sup> Mark's Christology is not so complicated. "Mark's main task was to prove that Jesus was indeed the Messiah despite his crucifixion."<sup>2</sup> Christ's miracles were demanded by Jewish messianism as evidence (cf. Acts 2:22; 1 Cor. 1:22). Kingsbury agrees that the interpretive key to Mark's Christology must be found within his Gospel rather than outside it.<sup>3</sup> Mark's Christology is basically conservative. He has "preserved the original bearing" of each of his traditions, so that his Son of God theology arises from the traditions he uses for his Gospel.<sup>4</sup> "For Mark, Jesus' Sonship comes to expression in his faithful fulfilment of the mission God had given him."<sup>5</sup> However, Mark clearly intends his readers to understand Jesus' sonship as a unique (and divine) relationship to God His Father.<sup>6</sup>

Mark 12:6. The major issues surrounding this parable have been

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Betz, "The Concept of the So-called 'Divine Man' in Mark's Christology," in Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature, pp. 229-40. For a contrary view, see Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," in Jesus and the Historian, pp. 114-33.

<sup>2</sup>Otto Betz, "Divine Man," p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?", p. 251. Kingsbury argues that the idea that Mark employs the title Son of Man to correct or counteract a faulty understanding of the title Son of God is in error (pp. 254-55).

<sup>4</sup>Kazmierski, p. 211.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 212. He adds, "As Son, Jesus was anointed to his mission, revealed in his fullness to the chosen disciples, who now stand as witnesses to the traditions of the Church, and finally rejected by the leaders of his own people."

<sup>6</sup>God's evaluative point of view is normative for Mark's Gospel, as seen primarily in God's statements from heaven that Jesus is His beloved Son (1:11; 9:7) (Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 48).

dealt with in connection with Matthew 21:37-38. In its Marcan form the key event is clearly the "sending of the son" (12:6-8),<sup>1</sup> which emphasizes "God's action in his Son Jesus."<sup>2</sup> The statement by the owner of the vineyard, "They will respect my son," may echo the heavenly voice at the baptism (1:11), since this is God's own designation of Jesus as His unique (only) Son.<sup>3</sup> Further, since "the son is a natural son," the parable may be regarded as teaching Jesus' divine sonship.<sup>4</sup>

Mark 12:35-37. The question Jesus implies is, "How is it possible for the Messiah to be both the 'son' of David and the 'lord' of David?"<sup>5</sup> Kingsbury states Jesus' answer as follows: "The Messiah is the 'son' of David because he is descended from David; by the same token, the Messiah is also the 'lord' of David because, as the Son of God, he is of higher station and authority than David."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Blank, pp. 11-41.

<sup>2</sup>Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 117; Kümmel, Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte, 1:212-13.

<sup>4</sup>Most, p. 78. Schweizer, however, believes that the parable was probably produced by the Christian community and that it teaches simply that "the significance of Jesus surpasses that of the prophets" (Schweizer, Jesus, p. 16).

<sup>5</sup>On the messianic expectations underlying Jesus' question, cf. Fritz Neugebauer, "Die Davidssonfrage (Mark xii. 35-7 parr.) und der Menschensohn," NIS 21 (1974):90-91. Schneider concludes that the idea of sonship was so bound up with 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7 that Mark understood the saying to mean that God would enthrone His Davidic ruler and adopt him as His son (Gerhard Schneider, "Die Davidssonfrage (Mk 12,35-37)," Bib 53 [1972]:89). Yet when Schneider says that Jesus here simply argues that if the Messiah were descended from David then God would view him as His son (p. 74), he undervalues the centrality of Jesus' divine sonship in Mark.

<sup>6</sup>Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, pp. 112-13; on the various problems of the pericope, cf. pp. 108-14; Burger, pp. 52-59, 64-

Mark 13:32. The authenticity of the title "the Son" in Mark 13:32 has been much debated. It is accepted by Cranfield, Cullmann, Marshall, Martin, Taylor, and Van Iersel,<sup>1</sup> but apparently rejected by Hahn<sup>2</sup> and seen by Dalman as distorted.<sup>3</sup> Barrett doubts the authenticity of the passage for two reasons: (1) the saying is not consistent with the teaching of Jesus as a whole; (2) the term "Son" (the highest honorific title) was probably introduced by the early church to compensate for Jesus' apparent ignorance during His incarnate life of the date of the end of the age.<sup>4</sup> Jeremias says that since "the Son" was not a designation for the Messiah in Palestine, the present form of Mark 13:32 could have arisen only in the Hellenistic community. The phrase "nor the Son," he says, is thus an addition and not authentic. But he reasons that "the Father" is equivalent to Aramaic abba, and thus is original.<sup>5</sup>

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70. Burger points out that Mark's version emphasizes polemically the lack of comprehension on the part of the scribes, whereas Matthew focuses on the words of David (p. 88). Loader relegates the composition of this passage to "later christological reflection," since he concludes that the title "Lord" was first applied to Jesus in connection with His exaltation. As it stands, he admits, "the pericope demands the understanding that Jesus was claiming for himself messiahship of the kind expressed in Ps. cx. i" (W. R. G. Loader, "Christ at the Right Hand--Ps. cx. 1 in the New Testament," NTS 24 [1978]:214-15).

<sup>1</sup>Cranfield, p. 410; Cullmann, pp. 288-89; Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," pp. 94-95; Ralph Martin, Mark, pp. 124-25; Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 522; Van Iersel, pp. 117-20.

<sup>2</sup>Hahn, pp. 312-13.

<sup>3</sup>Dalman, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup>Barrett, pp. 25-26; cf. Bultmann, History, p. 123.

<sup>5</sup>Jeremias, Prayers, p. 37. Jeremias says, however, that the stated limitation of the revelation to the Son is an indication of

Michel believes that an old Semitic tradition lies behind the saying (perhaps "not even the angels know it" was original).<sup>1</sup> In Dalman's view the entire ending, "nor the Son, but the Father only," was added later. He says that the terms "the Son" and "the Father" appear as a formula, and thus are due to the influence of church vocabulary.<sup>2</sup>

According to Fuller, "Son" here represents an original "Son of Man."<sup>3</sup> Schweizer too says that the passage is rooted in Son of Man Christology, since the Son of Man is connected with angels (in Matt. 13:41; 25:31; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 12:8; John 1:51) and Mark 8:38 (and parallels) has the triad Father, Son of Man, and angels. Since the parousia is central, the fact that the goal of the saying is not found in the title "Son" supports its authenticity.<sup>4</sup> Though the latter is true, it seems better to understand "the Son" as a variant form of "Son of God." Since in Mark God speaks of Jesus as "my Son" (1:11; 9:7), it is natural that Jesus would speak of Himself as "the Son."<sup>5</sup> It may in

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"considerable antiquity" (since only the Father is omniscient) (p. 52).

<sup>1</sup>Michel, p. 642.

<sup>2</sup>Dalman, p. 194. But cf. Zech. 14:7; Psalms of Solomon 17:23; and bSanh. 99a, where only God is said to know the day of redemption.

<sup>3</sup>Fuller, Foundations, p. 114; cf. R. P. Casey, "The Earliest Christologies," JThS 9 (1958):267.

<sup>4</sup>Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 372; cf. Van Iersel, p. 123. Schweizer later says, however, that "the absolute expression 'the Son' is almost impossible to reproduce in Aramaic," and therefore this statement did not originate with Jesus (Schweizer, Jesus, p. 16). He adds that if the statement is original, it merely refers to Jesus' subordination and obedience to the Father, just as Israel is God's son (p. 17).

<sup>5</sup>Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 139. This is true despite Vielhauer's observation that the absolute use of "the Son" is as unusual in Mark as the concept of ignorance in Jesus (cf. Vielhauer, p. 203).

fact echo Mark 12:6 where Jesus uses both "beloved son" and "my son" to refer to Himself.<sup>1</sup>

Taylor concludes concerning "the Son" that "of its genuineness there can be no reasonable doubt." The suggestion that a Christian redactor added the reference later is "wholly improbable," since the saying created difficulties for the church.<sup>2</sup> As Van Iersel notes, Luke omitted the saying entirely, but similar limitations are discussed in Mark 10:40 and 1 Corinthians 15:28. The ascending order from angels to Son to Father implies that Jesus here claims a unique relationship to the Father that can be described as "divine."<sup>3</sup>

It is highly unlikely that the early church would have developed a saying attributing ignorance to its Lord. If Jesus originally gave the saying without the phrase "nor the Son," the church would not have turned an acceptable saying into a "hard" saying. As Marshall says, there is no evidence that the church attributed ignorance or error to Jesus because of a delay in the parousia.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is apparent that "this saying could not have been invented by worshipping apostles, since it includes our Lord's confession of ignorance concerning the date of His Parousia. Yet in this saying Jesus claims a unique relationship to

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<sup>1</sup>Feneberg, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, Mark, p. 522.

<sup>3</sup>Van Iersel, pp. 117-23. Schrenk agrees that Mark 13:32 is ancient and authentic, and compares it to Matt. 24:36, where again "only" the Father has the stated knowledge (p. 989).

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," p. 94. He notes that the authenticity of Matt. 11:27 likewise supports the authenticity of Mark 13:32 (p. 93); cf. also Catchpole, p. 144. McDermott concludes, "There is no substantive reason for denying the authenticity of the phrase 'nor the Son'" ("Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 287).

the Father which can only be described as Divine."<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the title "the Son" in Mark 13:32 must be taken as identical to that intended in Matthew 11:27 and later in Mark 15:39. This saying "presupposes the conviction of the complete unity of Father and Son and becomes really meaningful only on that basis."<sup>2</sup> The only point during Christ's incarnation in which a gap is indicated in this unity is in His knowledge of the date of the end of the age, since the Father fixes this date within His own absolute sovereignty (cf. Acts 1:7).<sup>3</sup> However, as Vos indicates, "whatever ignorance existed in the Son must have existed within the limits of his human nature."<sup>4</sup>

#### In Luke

Some scholars assert that Jesus' sonship is not an important aspect of Luke's writings.<sup>5</sup> Voss, for example, calls Luke's Christology "anthropocentric," concentrating on the effect of Jesus' life on the world of men rather than emphasizing the identity and nature of Jesus Himself.<sup>6</sup> Others argue, however, that the concept of Jesus as Son is

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<sup>1</sup>Argyle, "The Evidence for the Belief that Our Lord Himself Claimed to Be Divine," p. 230.

<sup>2</sup>Cullmann, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. He notes that "it is questionable whether the early Church could have invented a saying of Jesus which in this way limits his unity with the Father at such an important point" (pp. 288-89). Hahn says that the dependence of the Son on the Father is shown here by a restriction of the authority of Jesus (p. 312).

<sup>4</sup>Vos, p. 168.

<sup>5</sup>Dunn, p. 50. Dunn is forced to admit, however, that by means of the virgin conception Luke shows that there was never a time in Jesus' life when He was not the Son of God (p. 51).

<sup>6</sup>Gerhard Voss, Die Christologie der lukanischen Schriften in

the most important and characteristic element of Luke's Gospel.<sup>1</sup> Luke uses the title "Son" for Jesus thirteen times in nine passages, and refers to God as His Father eleven times in seven passages. Luke does not include any passages in which human beings use the title Son of God for Jesus, but he gives three passages in which Jesus calls Himself the Son (10:22; 20:13; 22:70).<sup>2</sup> The message of the annunciation ("He shall be called the Son of God") is confirmed by the first words of Jesus in the Gospel: "I must be in My Father's house" (2:49).<sup>3</sup> He thus declares to His earthly parents that He has another Father.

The unique relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son is seen in the miraculous conception (1:27-35); the use of the terms "holy" ("set apart," 1:35), "great" (1:32), and "kingdom" (1:33); His anointing with the Spirit and the announcement of unique sonship at His baptism (3:22); His perfect obedience to the will of the Father at the temptation (4:1-13); and His claim to a unique and exclusive knowledge of the Father (10:22).<sup>4</sup> In 22:29 Jesus reveals that He has received the

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Grundzügen, pp. 172-73.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Malcolm Wren, "Sonship in Luke," SJTh 37 (1984):301.

<sup>2</sup>George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu," pp. 194-99. Luke reports that Jesus is the Son of God in 1:32, 35; 3:22; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 9:35; 10:22; 20:13; 22:70; 23:47. On Luke's use of the title, cf. Warfield, pp. 110-19.

<sup>3</sup>As Schweizer puts it, "In Luke the first word spoken by Jesus is a reference to the God who is above him yet with whom he is associated as with no other" (Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Luke, p. 64).

<sup>4</sup>Jack D. Kingsbury, Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, pp. 104-5. Kingsbury summarizes Luke's understanding of Jesus as the Son of God as follows: "Jesus is the Son of God, for, conceived by the Holy Spirit and chosen and empowered by God for messianic ministry, he knows God completely, obeys him perfectly, and acts on his divine authority to



kingdom from His Father as the legitimate heir (cf. 20:14). His divine sonship is thus the foundation for His messianic royalty.<sup>1</sup>

Each of Jesus' prayers in Luke begins with the address "Father." This includes Jesus' prayers on the cross (23:34, 46). In Jesus' last words before death, as in His first recorded words after birth (2:49), He refers to God as His Father.<sup>2</sup>

Luke clearly presents Jesus as a supernatural Person, and his use of the title Son of God coincides basically with that of Matthew and Mark.<sup>3</sup> Luke did not create the theme of Jesus' divine sonship; it must be traced back to Jesus Himself. Since the apostles apparently did not use the title often in their early Palestinian preaching (cf. Acts 1--12), they may have felt that their Jewish audience would not apply it to the Messiah. Luke presents the title as somewhat mysterious, and connects it to the Messiah.<sup>4</sup> He is aware, however, that the messiahship

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reveal him to those who become his disciples; as the one who is thus the bearer of God's kingdom, he overthrows the kingdom of Satan and, as Savior, Messiah, and Lord, restores Israel" (p. 105).

<sup>1</sup>George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu," p. 201. Fuller believes that Luke presents a two-stage Christology, divided between the earthly and the heavenly (Fuller and Perkins, p. 90). The title "Son of God," used in a salvation-historical framework, straddles these two stages. Jesus is destined for the role of Son (1:32, 35), He is invested as Son of God at His baptism (3:22), and enthroned at His ascension. The royal aspect of the title takes effect at His exaltation (Acts 13:33).

<sup>2</sup>George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu," pp. 203-5. According to George, "Il est clair que Luc y porte un intérêt particulier et qu'il y entend la filiation de Jésus comme une relation d'intimité unique avec son Père, surtout dans sa prière" (p. 206).

<sup>3</sup>Ned B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Luke to Christ, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup>George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu," pp. 206-7; Lars Hartman, "Taufe, Geist und Sohnschaft," in Jesus in der Verkündigung der Kirche, p. 108; Burger, pp. 114-16. That Luke sees a relationship between the titles "Son of Man" and "Son of God" may be seen in 22:69-71, where Luke shows

of Jesus far surpasses the "royal son of God" concept in the Old Testament (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7) and that no Old Testament title fully expresses the mystery of Jesus. One title must therefore be completed by another.

The mission of the Son consists in revealing the Father whom the Son alone knows (10:21-22).<sup>1</sup> "Jesus' sonship is not a mere title or privilege but a dependence, an intimacy, a total communion."<sup>2</sup> In all three places in Luke in which the adult Jesus speaks of God as "my Father" (10:22; 22:29; 24:49), He claims to be authorized by the "Father" to pass on the gifts of God (knowledge of God, the kingdom, the Spirit) to mankind. Thus a relationship of man with God is possible only through "the Son," so that the Son has a position between God and man.<sup>3</sup> The mutual relationship of the Son and Father is exclusive.

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that the Sanhedrin infers Jesus' claim to divine sonship from His statement concerning the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God (Kim, Son of Man, p. 4).

<sup>1</sup>George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu," pp. 208-9. Luke also clarifies the relationship between the Son and the Spirit (cf. 1:35; 4:1; 10:21; 24:49; Acts 2:33). On the relationship between Luke 10:22 and the whole of Luke's Christology, cf. Voss, p. 120. This passage (10:22) shows an exact correspondence and reciprocity between the knowledge of both the Father and the Son and thus "constitutes an unambiguous claim of deity on the part of the Son" (Stonehouse, The Witness of Luke, p. 167).

<sup>2</sup>George, "Son of God in Luke," ThD 15 (1967):133. He adds, "To be the Son is nothing other than to live by and for the Father, to achieve his design and glory." Fitzmyer says that when Luke calls Jesus the Son of God he does not mean that Jesus is God's Son merely in an adoptive sense as a king on David's throne, as is shown by his explicit relation of the title to Jesus' conception in 1:32, 35 (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, p. 207). Schweitzer notes that Luke was apparently concerned about the title being misunderstood as a reference to pagan "sons of God" or "divine men," since he replaced Son of God in the centurion's confession with δίκαιος ("righteous," 23:47) ("υἱός," p. 381).

<sup>3</sup>Jonge, "Sonship, Wisdom, Infancy," p. 352.

### Conclusion

The strong presumption of the genuineness of such passages as Matthew 11:27 and Mark 13:32 supports the genuineness of the other sayings in which Jesus calls Himself the "Son."<sup>1</sup> There are therefore "probable grounds for affirming that the historical Jesus used the title 'the Son' in defining and revealing his relation to Abba."<sup>2</sup> This sonship must be understood as unique, exclusive, and supernatural. According to Taylor, "From the evidence as a whole we are entitled to conclude that His consciousness of divine Sonship is the key to the presentation of Jesus we find in all the Gospels. His divine consciousness is expressed in words and in deeds."<sup>3</sup>

### Jesus as the Son of God

There is no passage in the Synoptic Gospels in which Jesus explicitly calls Himself "the Son of God." Yet He does so by implication and accepts the title from others.<sup>4</sup>

### Matthew 16:16-17; 27:43

Matthew 16:17 must be counted as one of Jesus' declarations that He is the Son of God, though here He speaks of this deep truth as a divine revelation with strict reserve, showing perhaps why He uses the

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<sup>1</sup>Jay, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 301.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, Person, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>J. P. Sheraton, "Our Lord's Teaching Concerning Himself," PTR 1 (1903):528. As Dalman puts it, "Jesus never applied to Himself the title 'Son of God,' and yet made it indubitably clear that He was not merely 'a' but 'the Son of God'" (p. 280).

title so seldom as a self-designation.<sup>1</sup> Also highly significant is the taunt of the scribes at the cross: "He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matt. 27:43).

Matthew 26:63-64/Mark  
14:61-62/Luke 22:70

In one passage of the Synoptics Jesus clearly and publicly accepts the full title "the Son of God" for Himself in response to an official demand that He do so--at His trial before the Sanhedrin. In Mark the high priest asks, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" and Jesus answers, "I am." In Matthew the high priest says, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God," to which Jesus replies, "You have said so." And in Luke the questions are separated: (1) "If you are the Christ, tell us" (22:67); (2) "Are you the Son of God, then?" (22:70). To the latter question, Jesus replies, "You say that I am."

Scholars hold three principal viewpoints on the meaning of the titles Christ (Messiah) and Son of God in the high priest's question: (1) the two titles denote different charges; (2) the term Son of God indicates a transcendent or superhuman messiahship; (3) Son of God is merely a title of the entirely human Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Howard, Steichele, Vielhauer, and Loader believe that in Mark 14:61 the title "Son of the Blessed One" is in apposition to "Christ" and therefore has the same meaning.<sup>3</sup> Bultmann also thinks that Mark

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Catchpole, pp. 86-101; cf. Steichele, pp. 284-86.

<sup>3</sup>Virgil Howard, Das Ego Jesu in den synoptischen Evangelien, p.

must have understood the title Son of God as a title of the messianic king (cf. 15:26).<sup>1</sup> According to Wessel the Jews understood the title Son of God solely in a messianic (and purely human) sense, so that the high priest's question has nothing to do with deity.<sup>2</sup> Turner agrees that the terms "Son of the Blessed" and "Son of God" are "simply messianic, not an indication of divine essence,"<sup>3</sup> and O'Neill argues that the question shows that "Son of God" was an acceptable messianic designation to the Jews.<sup>4</sup> Williams says that it was assumed by the high priest that the true Messiah would be the "Son of God," without metaphysical connotations, since at the time of Jesus "the purely human character of the Messiah was not insisted on by Jewish teachers as it became insisted on after the development of Christianity." The Messiah, he says, had a special relationship to God and "was in a pre-eminent sense his Son."<sup>5</sup>

These attempts to eliminate the idea of divinity from the high priest's question, however, do not do justice either to the details of the trial itself or to the presentation of Jesus' sonship given in each

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146, n. 1; Steichele, p. 285; Vielhauer, p. 201; Loader, "The Apocalyptic Model of Sonship," p. 539; cf. Klostermann, pp. 155-56. Steichele suggests a comparison with Mark 15:32a (p. 289). Loader says that Luke, however, is aware that "the Son of God" means more than "the Messiah," so he separates the titles into two questions (p. 539).

<sup>1</sup>Bultmann, History, p. 248, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 8:769.

<sup>3</sup>M. M. B. Turner, "The Spirit of Christ and Christology," in Christ the Lord, pp. 172-73.

<sup>4</sup>O'Neill, pp. 74-75.

<sup>5</sup>Williams, Messiah, p. 315.

Gospel. The question, "Are you the Son of God?", is credible only if the high priest had heard reports that Jesus had indeed claimed to be the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> As shown in chapters three and four, the Jews did not really use "Son of God" as a title for the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> As Schweizer puts it, "Judaism did not prosecute anyone for claiming to be the Messiah."<sup>3</sup>

It may be that the two questions cited by Luke were summarized into one in Matthew and Mark.<sup>4</sup> It may also be that Mark's version reflects an original Aramaic phrasing, particularly of the second part: "Are you the Son of the Blessed?" The high priest would normally use great reserve with respect to the name of God. It is clear that the high priest was acquainted with Jesus' claim, or with the claim of others about Him, to be the Messiah and the Son of God. His purpose in asking the questions was to catch Jesus in the blasphemy of claiming equality with God. It is also clear that the priests were actively seeking evidence against Jesus in order to have Him put to death (cf. Mark 14:55). False witnesses were brought in to speak against Him (14:56-59). When Jesus refused to answer the false testimony (Mark 14:61a), the high priest apparently decided to ask some pointed questions in order to obtain some admission or misstatement on the part

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ladd, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Kümmel, Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte, 1:215.

<sup>3</sup>Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Mark, p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>Kingsbury suggests that according to Mark the high priest takes the claims that Jesus had made allegorically in the parable of the wicked tenants (spoken to "the chief priests," among others—Mark 11:27; 12:1) and inferentially in the question about David's son (12:35-37) and puts them together in clear and literal terms: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed [God]?" (Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 118).

of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The question of the high priest. According to Luke the Sanhedrin first asks about the messiahship of Jesus. When He answers that He will sit on the right hand of the power of God, the Sanhedrin understands this as a claim to equality with God. In order to provide a clearer case of blasphemy, a second question is posed: "Are you then the Son of God?" This last question must be designed by the high priest to catch Jesus in blasphemy. When Jesus replies in the affirmative, this seals His death sentence and becomes "His own supreme testimony to His divinity."<sup>2</sup> By listing the second question separately, Luke emphasizes that Jesus is Himself the Son of God and that this is not just an honorific title for the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> The title Son of God thus becomes a climax,<sup>4</sup> and the terms Messiah and Son of God are therefore complementary rather than interchangeable.<sup>5</sup> The high priest apparently held the view that messiahship and divine sonship could not be connected, so that Jesus' claim to be both was equivalent to blasphemy.

Marshall suggests that the Sanhedrin regarded Jesus in His initial answer as claiming to be the Son of Man who sits beside God, so

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the discussion by Edwards, pp. 167-69.

<sup>2</sup>Pansini, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 8:1037.

<sup>4</sup>Martin Rese, Alttestamentliche Motive in der Christologie des Lukas, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup>Catchpole, p. 197. Catchpole suggests that the original form of Luke 22:67-70 belongs to circles which did not yet equate Messiah and Son of God, so that to claim divine sonship is to blaspheme God (p. 200).

they then ask whether this means that He is the Son of God. "For Luke sitting on the right hand of God is tantamount to divine Sonship." He adds that "it is unlikely that divine Sonship is regarded simply as a metaphorical attribute of the Messiah."<sup>1</sup>

The title "Son of the Blessed One" is not found elsewhere in the New Testament or in extant Jewish literature. The use of "the Blessed One" for the name of God is also rare; it occurs once in the Mishnah (Berakoth 7. 3).<sup>2</sup> It may be related to the rabbinic expression, "the Holy One, Blessed be He."<sup>3</sup> Hahn thinks it probable that "Son of the Blessed" was used as a (messianic) title in pre-Christian Palestinian Judaism,<sup>4</sup> though evidence for this is lacking.<sup>5</sup> Donahue takes it as a Marcan term for "Son of God," and says that it does not receive its definitive and correct meaning publicly until Jesus accepts it with "I am" and qualifies it by citing Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, NIGTC, p. 851. He says that Jesus' answer is "a grudging admission with the suggestion that the speaker would put it otherwise or that the questioners fail to understand exactly what they are asking." Dalman counters that Luke's first question is probably the only authentic one. Luke, he says, added his second question in order to elaborate on Jesus' sonship (p. 274).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Kazmierski, p. 170; Donald Juel, Messiah and Temple, SBLDS, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>Juel, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup>Hahn, p. 284. Schlatter believes that the content of the question (Messiah = Son) is drawn from Psalm 2 (Der Evangelist Matthäus, p. 759).

<sup>5</sup>Kazmierski, p. 171.

<sup>6</sup>John R. Donahue, Are You the Christ?, pp. 177-80. Norman Perrin ("The High Priest's Question and Jesus' Answer," in The Passion in Mark, p. 88) says that "Son of the Blessed" in Mark 14:61 is "a deliberate echo of the 'Son of God' in 1:1, and preparation for the final use of 'Son of God' in 15:39." Weeden argues that the use of both



The most logical conclusion appears to be that the first question focuses on the possible messiahship of Jesus. Jesus does not refuse the title, but proceeds to speak of His imminent messianic exaltation at the right hand of God by allusion to Psalm 110:1. The Sanhedrin realizes that Jesus is speaking of a heavenly Messiah who surpasses their traditional expectations, so they ask Him a second question (hoping to receive an affirmative answer): "Are you the Son of God, then?" Jesus accepts the title and is immediately accused of blasphemy.<sup>1</sup> Jesus would not have answered this question in the affirmative if He had not already claimed divine sonship during His ministry. As to the precise sense in which Jesus accepts the designation, one must remember Bess' suggestion that in the New Testament the idiom of sonship follows that of the Old Testament,

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"Christ" and "Son of God" in 14:61 shows that a divine man (Son of God) Christology is here being corrected by a Son of Man (passion) Christology (Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., "The Cross as Power in Weakness," in The Passion in Mark, pp. 199-20). He claims that when the centurion later proclaims Jesus to be the Son of God as a result of how Jesus died (Mark 15:39), the divine man Christology is finally and completely repudiated. Elsewhere Donahue states that Mark here uses the term "Son" to designate Jesus as the anointed and enthroned eschatological King (cf. John R. Donahue, "Temple, Trial, and Royal Christology," in The Passion in Mark, p. 74). Hahn also emphasizes the eschatological connection of the titles at the trial (cf. Hahn, pp. 285-88). He says that Jesus' answer interprets the messianic question in terms of the Son of Man and His eschatological activity as Messiah. His divine sonship has to do with the dignity and power of His messianic office (p. 285). The coming "from heaven" shows fusion with the Son of Man tradition (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9-10) (p. 286). Hahn concludes that the title Son of God is here to be understood as "a comprehensive title of honour, one to be associated with all the work of Christ." It is "a characteristic title of the exalted Jesus who has been adopted by God and installed in his heavenly office" (p. 288).

<sup>1</sup>Cf. George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu," pp. 198-99.

emphasizing similarity or identity of nature or character.<sup>1</sup> When Jesus takes for Himself the title Son of God, He is therefore claiming to be of the same nature or character as God, and thus equal with God (cf. John 5:18; 10:28-36).<sup>2</sup> This is shown further by His citations from the Old Testament and by the charge of blasphemy which Jesus arouses from the Sanhedrin.

The answer of Jesus. According to Mark, when asked, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?", Jesus answers, "I am" (14:62). According to Matthew, Jesus answers, "You have said so" (26:63). And according to Luke, Jesus says, "You say that I am" (22:70). Is Jesus being intentionally evasive, or is His answer an affirmation of His divine sonship? Five points prove the latter. First, Jesus' "I am" of Mark 14:62 may be seen as expressing the sense of the more ambiguous translations in Matthew and Luke, particularly when compared with Jesus' reply to Pilate's initial question in Mark 15:2. Second, according to Matthew 26:25, when Judas asks Jesus (concerning his approaching betrayal), "Is it I, Rabbi?" Jesus answers, "You have said" (precisely as in 26:63). Since Jesus' answer to Judas is clearly in the affirmative (although more ambiguous than a simple "yes"), His answer to the high priest must be taken as clearly affirmative as well. Third, following His initial answer, Jesus cites a combination of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 with reference to Himself, thus presenting Himself

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<sup>1</sup>E.g., "son of consolation," Acts 4:36; "sons of thunder," Mark 3:17; "son of peace," Luke 10:6; "sons of Abraham," Gal. 3:7; "sons of disobedience," Eph. 2:2; "son of perdition," John 17:12; 2 Thess. 2:3.

<sup>2</sup>S. Herbert Bess, "The Term 'Son of God' in the Light of Old Testament Idiom," GrJ 6 (Spring 1965):19.

prophetically as a supernatural Messiah. Fourth, the fact that the high priest immediately tears his robe and charges Jesus with blasphemy, so that the whole Sanhedrin agrees that He should receive the death penalty, shows that Jesus' answer (both directly and scripturally) is clearly understood as the affirmation of a unique, divine sonship. And fifth, the fact that Jesus denies neither the suggestion of sonship nor the charge of blasphemy indicates that the clear intention of His answer is to affirm His divinity, not to deny or evade it.<sup>1</sup>

A number of scholars have seen in Jesus' "I am" something more than a simple affirmation. Donahue claims that when compared with Mark 6:50; 13:6, it emerges as a revelational formula (the content of which is determined by 14:62, a Christophany [cf. Exod. 3:14]).<sup>2</sup> Others disagree. Linton denies that Jesus intended "I am" as a statement of the sacred name of God, since in His citation of Psalm 110:1 Jesus speaks of the "right hand of power" (in accordance with Jewish custom) rather than the "right hand of God."<sup>3</sup> According to Lane the structure of Mark 14:61-62 also shows that Jesus did not pronounce the divine name in answering "I am." The question "Are you . . . ?" receives the affirmative response "I am." His response is then supported by the prophecy (Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13) that follows it, in which Jesus speaks of His coming exaltation to the place of highest honor and power at

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthäus, p. 760; Howard, pp. 142-48; Edwards, pp. 168-74; William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, NIC, p. 999; Jeremiah 38:15.

<sup>2</sup>Donahue, Are You the Christ?, pp. 92-93; cf. Kazmierski, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup>Olof Linton, "The Trial of Jesus and the Interpretation of Psalm CX," NIS 7 (1961):259. Linton says that Jesus' "I am" must refer to the question concerning the Messiah, not to divine sonship.

God's side.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus next declares Himself to be the Son of Man with a place of honor at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven, citing Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.<sup>2</sup> In the Midrash on Psalm 2:7, the statement, "You are my Son," is related to Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 42:1; 52:13; Psalm 110:1; and Daniel 7:13.<sup>3</sup> The concept of divine sonship from Psalm 2:7 is apparently combined with one of these passages, Isaiah 42:1, in the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism (cf. Mark 1:11). Here at Jesus' trial, the title Son of God is combined with two other passages listed in the Midrash—Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.<sup>4</sup>

In Luke's account of the trial, the chief priests first say to Jesus, "If you are the Christ, tell us" (22:67). But Jesus avoids a direct answer, and says instead, "Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" (22:69). To this the chief priests all reply, "Are you the Son of God, then?" (22:70). Jesus then answers, "You say that I am" (v. 70). It is apparent here that Jesus' reference to Psalm 110:1 leads the priests immediately to the question concerning His divine sonship. The note that "all" ask the second question and the use of the conjunction "then" indicate that "the question of Jesus'

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<sup>1</sup>William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, NICNT, P. 537. It remains possible, however, that Jesus' "I am" in Mark may be designed to express His unity with God; cf. Evald Lövestam, Son and Saviour, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Alfred Suhl, Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium, pp. 54-56. In Kim's view Jesus understood the Son of Man to be "the inclusive representative of the ideal people of God, or the Son of God representing the sons of God" (Kim, Son of Man, p. 99).

<sup>3</sup>Midrash on Psalms 2. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Lövestam, p. 108.

being God's Son follows as a consequence from Jesus' application of Ps. 110:1 to himself."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' assertion of messiahship could not by itself have led to the death sentence. In citing Daniel 7:13, however, Jesus claims the prerogative of final judgment. Ladd says that Jesus was condemned to death because of His claim to future exaltation and the exercise of rights that are God's alone.<sup>2</sup> Clearly Jesus raised messiahship to "supernatural heights."<sup>3</sup> The Messiah sitting at the right hand of the glorious God appeared as equal to God.

The charge of blasphemy. The Mishnah gives regulations concerning trials for blasphemy, and states, "'The blasphemer' is not culpable unless he pronounces the Name itself."<sup>4</sup> The tearing of the high priest's garments is expected only if the name of Yahweh is clearly used. Since Jesus clearly did not use the name of Yahweh, the charge of blasphemy may be based on the absolute use of "I am" (or the equivalent)

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<sup>1</sup>Lövestam, p. 109. He says that it is the royal and judicial aspect of Jesus' sonship which is emphasized at His trial, with a focus on His exaltation and eschatological coming (cf. Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5-7; 5:5). On the use of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 in the Synoptic Gospels, cf. Linton, "The Trial of Jesus and the Interpretation of Psalm CX," pp. 258-62; Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, NTL, pp. 173-85; David M. Hay, Glory at the Right Hand, pp. 52-121 passim. Hay concludes that Mark intended the allusion to Psalm 110:1 to point to the parousia when Jesus' messiahship will be vindicated (p. 67).

<sup>2</sup>Ladd, p. 168; cf. McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," p. 280; O'Neill, who says that this would not be a capital offense (p. 73).

<sup>3</sup>Vosté, "The Title 'Son of God' in the Synoptic Gospels," p. 32; cf. Schweizer, who says that "Son of Man" here designates one who is exalted to God and is thus equated with "Son of God" (Good News According to Luke, p. 348).

<sup>4</sup>Sanhedrin 7. 5; cf. Lev. 24:10-16; Yoma 3. 8; 6. 2; Sotah 7. 6.

as a divine revelational formula expressing Jesus' equality with God (cf. John 8:58). Jesus also presents Himself as Judge of the world, which could be seen as claiming a position that belongs uniquely to God.<sup>1</sup> Linton suggests that applying a literal interpretation of Psalm 110:1 to Jesus would involve the blasphemy of intruding on God's special privilege by the one who sits at God's right hand. It is "an attack on the confession of the one God" (cf. Mark 2:7; John 10:33-36).<sup>2</sup>

It may be that a strict interpretation of blasphemy was not in force at the time of Jesus. Lane says that the law concerning blasphemy was very "elastic" in the first century. To blaspheme God meant "to dishonor him by diminishing his majesty or depriving him of rights to which he is entitled." According to Lane the law was restricted to the sin of actually pronouncing the divine name only in a later generation following the councils at Jamnia.<sup>3</sup> Juel notes that "blasphemy" is a broad term in Mark (cf. 2:7; 3:28; 7:22; 15:29), and argues that the term at the trial may mean simply the "violation of the majesty of God or infringement on God's prerogatives."<sup>4</sup> Wessel likewise says that the high priest called Jesus' answer blasphemous as an "affront to the

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<sup>1</sup>Kazmierski, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Linton, "The Trial of Jesus and the Interpretation of Psalm CX," p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>Lane, p. 538.

<sup>4</sup>Juel, pp. 102-3; cf. Acts 7:55-58. On the background to the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees centering on their doctrines of God and the Messiah, cf. Preston Brooks Sellers, "The Doctrinal Basis of the Conflict of the Pharisees with Jesus" (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1949), pp. 152-255.

majesty and authority of God."<sup>1</sup>

Six reasons have been suggested for Jesus' condemnation by the Sanhedrin: (1) speaking against the temple; (2) the claim to be the Messiah; (3) the use of the divine name "I am"; (4) the self-exaltation as the enthroned Son of Man; (5) the claim to be the Son of God;<sup>2</sup> and (6) presumptuous disobedience of the high priest.<sup>3</sup> The first can be laid aside at once, since all the Synoptics are clear that the false witnesses were unable to present convincing evidence that Jesus had spoken against the temple.<sup>4</sup> Likewise the third and sixth, though possible, lack solid evidence.

Juel argues that both the messianic claim and the Son of Man

<sup>1</sup>Wessel, pp. 769-70.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Catchpole, pp. 126-48; Juel, pp. 98-101.

<sup>3</sup>Schillebeeckx strangely says that the trial was based on the law of Deuteronomy 17:12. When Jesus was totally silent before the high priest, this was construed by the majority of the Sanhedrin as holding Israel's highest authority in contempt, and thus legal grounds for execution. The Sanhedrin later tried to escape its responsibility by handing Jesus over to Pilate to be tried on purely political grounds (Schillebeeckx, pp. 312-17). To hold this view, Schillebeeckx must assume that all of Jesus' answers and quotations from the Old Testament were added later by the church (p. 315). Wilson similarly concludes that wherever any of the Gospels mention Jesus' divine sonship as an issue at the trial they are unhistorical, since they are merely reflecting the early church's beliefs about Jesus (William R. Wilson, The Execution of Jesus, pp. 122-26). He believes that Mark so construed the trial to blame the Jews, not the Romans, for Jesus' death. But actually the sole concern of the Sanhedrin was Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, since some officials feared that He would stir up a political revolt during the Passover (as they later charged before Pilate).

<sup>4</sup>According to 2 Samuel 7:12-15, the son of David was to build the temple for God. Kim suggests that the high priest saw in Jesus' temple-saying a "hidden claim to messiahship," so that he then asked directly whether Jesus was the Messiah (Kim, Son of Man, pp. 79-80). Kim relates Jesus' claim to raise the temple in three days to Hosea 6:2, where God promises to revive and raise up Israel ("the eschatological community, the messianic people of God") "on the third day."

citation are the most likely choices as the cause of the charge of blasphemy, though he says that the evidence favors the messianic claim.<sup>1</sup> Lane agrees that the Jewish leaders made Jesus' open claim to be the Messiah a capital offense. He suggests that the rabbis believed that "God alone had the right to announce and enthrone the Messiah, so that one who claimed the messianic dignity before God had crowned him could be regarded as having infringed the majesty of God."<sup>2</sup> Similarly Turner concludes that the blasphemy consisted of "the anticipation of God's declaration of the Messiah by Jesus' public affirmation of messiahship before the messianic task was completed."<sup>3</sup>

This view, however, ignores the fact that merely claiming to be the Messiah was never grounds for blasphemy. Even an unsubstantiated or deceitful claim could not be called blasphemy.<sup>4</sup> Morris suggests that Jesus' reference to the Son of Man and His position at God's right hand seemed to the Sanhedrin to be a claim to a higher place than what they understood the Messiah to occupy. To claim to be the Messiah was not blasphemy, but this was different. The death sentence was passed because (1) Jesus did not deny claiming divine sonship and (2) in their

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<sup>1</sup>Juel, p. 106. Carson admits that he is uncertain of the exact reason for the charge of blasphemy against Jesus ("Matthew," EBC, p. 556).

<sup>2</sup>Lane, p. 536. Howard says that as far as Mark is concerned, Jesus' supposed blasphemy can only lie in His positive answer to the question concerning whether He is the Messiah (p. 146).

<sup>3</sup>Turner, pp. 172-73. It is apparent, however, that "the Judaism of Jesus' time had no fixed, common doctrine of the messiah" (Kim, Son of Man, p. 81).

<sup>4</sup>Vos, pp. 173-74.



view He claimed a position higher than messiahship<sup>1</sup>--a "presumption of superhuman dignity."<sup>2</sup> As Linton notes, in Mark it is when Jesus mentions a position at God's right hand that the high priest tears his clothes and cries "blasphemy" (14:63-64).<sup>3</sup> In the early church too, "sitting at God's right hand" meant sitting in heaven with God (cf. Acts 2:34).<sup>4</sup>

Yet even this view is incomplete. Luke's version makes it clear that the question concerning Jesus' divine sonship was formulated precisely in order to provide the basis for a charge of blasphemy. The Sanhedrin must therefore have taken the title "Son of God" which Jesus affirmed as ontological in meaning.<sup>5</sup> This accords with John 19:7, which confirms that Jesus was condemned to die because "He made Himself the

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<sup>1</sup>Leon Morris, The Gospel According to St. Luke, TNIC, pp. 318-19. On Jewish messianic views at the time of Jesus, cf. Elrod, pp. 2-9.

<sup>2</sup>Stonehouse, The Witness of Luke, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Linton, "The Trial of Jesus and the Interpretation of Psalm CX," p. 260.

<sup>4</sup>Linton claims, however, that the Jews did not interpret the psalm so literally. Instead, when someone was said to be "sitting at the right hand of God," he was simply allied with God against common enemies and God was on His side. It is only later Christian exegesis that could associate the use of Ps. 110:1 with blasphemy (ibid., p. 261).

<sup>5</sup>Chronis adds that even Mark clearly "considers Jesus' divinity to be the real bone of contention at the trial" (Chronis, "The Torr. Veil," p. 106). Schedl tries to dampen the significance of these facts by theorizing that Jesus had merely interpreted the term "Son of God" in a new way, though still in an orthodox sense, in that He used it as a designation for Himself. The Sanhedrin, he says, interpreted such a claim as blasphemy and sentenced Him to death. "Jesus was thus condemned to death because He understood the designation 'Son of God' not only as a messianic title but as a personal self-designation" (Schedl, p. 194).

Son of God."<sup>1</sup> It was not blasphemy to claim to be God's Son simply in a metaphorical or messianic sense. Accordingly, "Jesus' supposed blasphemy did not consist in his claim to messiahship (other messianic claimants were not judged blasphemers), but in his claim to deity."<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion

The fact that "Son of God" is found in all the Gospel strata is "undeniable proof that Jesus used it of himself."<sup>3</sup> This, added to the great weight of evidence that Jesus called God His Father (Abba) in a very intimate, unique, and exclusive sense, leads inevitably to the conclusion that when Jesus spoke of Himself as God's Son He intended that title to be understood precisely in the sense in which it was

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Lilly, "Jesus Christ's Revelation of His Messianic Dignity and of His Divinity," AEcR 119 (1948):140. On Jesus' claim to divinity, see also Robert G. Gromacki, The Virgin Birth, pp. 62-63; Liddon, pp. 190-91; Vos, p. 175. Each of the Synoptic authors show that Jesus was condemned to death for being exactly who He is--the Son of God. Kingsbury calls attention to three ironies in the episode (Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, pp. 120-21). (1) The high priest unknowingly asks Jesus to acknowledge publicly who He really is. (2) Jesus is condemned for thinking about Himself exactly as God has revealed He thinks about Jesus (cf. Mark 1:11; 9:7). (3) While claiming to know God's thinking about Jesus, the Sanhedrin actually repudiates God's thinking.

<sup>2</sup>Gundry, p. 546. He adds, "That claim does not consist alone in the expression 'Son of God' . . . Rather, it consists in Jesus' modifying the expression--here by associating it with sitting beside God and coming with the theophanic symbol of clouds--so as to connote divine nature as well as divine ordination" (ibid.). Catchpole argues that the claim to be God's Son elicited the charge of blasphemy because of such passages as Matthew 11:27 and Mark 13:32 and in the light of the probable historicity of Luke's version (pp. 143-48, 200). O'Neill concludes that Jesus was charged with blasphemy in that He presumed to say that He was the Son of God when the Father alone knew who the Son was (cf. Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22), and thus "made Himself" the Son of God (cf. John 19:7) (p. 77).

<sup>3</sup>Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 3 vols., 2:687.

apparently taken at His trial and later in the writings of the apostles Paul and John--as the supernatural, divine Son who could rightfully place Himself on a level of equality with the Father and the Spirit in His final commission to His apostles (Matt. 28:19).

In the following chapter this definition of the title will be shown to accord with its use by others as applied to Jesus--by the Father Himself, by Satan and his demons, by Jesus' disciples, by the angels of God, and even by Jesus' enemies.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE USE OF THE TITLE "SON OF GOD" BY OTHERS

#### Introduction

It is commonly alleged by New Testament scholars that, though Jesus may actually have called God His Father and referred to Himself (though rarely) as a Son, it is unlikely that the title Son was ever applied to Him by others until later in the development of Christian theology. Dalman, for example, concludes that "Jesus was not called 'the Son of God' by any contemporary."<sup>1</sup> In order to say this, however, Dalman has to assume the inauthenticity of numerous passages that do not fit his scheme, and thus he depends almost completely on a circular argument. As will be shown in this chapter, there are a relatively large number of instances in the Synoptic Gospels in which the title (either "the Son of God" or "My Son") is applied to Jesus by those who met or knew Him.

#### The Definiteness of Jesus' Sonship

Many occurrences of the title Son of God in the Synoptic Gospels have the definite article and thereby clearly designate Jesus as the unique and only Son of the one true God (e.g., Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Mark 3:11; 14:61; Luke 4:41; 22:70). In other instances, however, the

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<sup>1</sup>Gustaf Dalman, The Words of Jesus, p. 275.

article is lacking, and some scholars have suggested that in such cases the title is intended to be indefinite, "a son of God."<sup>1</sup> E. C. Colwell, however, has shown that a definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb, but usually does not have the article when it precedes the verb.<sup>2</sup> In the Synoptic Gospels, when "Son" or "Son of God" precedes the verb it is always anarthrous (cf. Matt. 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 27:40, 54; Mark 5:7; 15:39; Luke 1:32; 4:3, 9; 8:28) and when the title follows the verb it almost always takes the definite article (cf. Matt. 3:17; 11:27; 16:16; 17:5; 21:37; 26:63; Mark 3:11; 14:61; Luke 3:22; 4:41; 9:35; 10:22; 20:13; 22:70; the only two exceptions, for special reasons, are Matt. 27:43; Luke 1:35). Each occurrence should therefore be interpreted in a definite sense as referring to Jesus as "the Son of God."<sup>3</sup>

#### Jesus' Sonship as Messiahship

The question of the relationship between the titles Messiah and Son of God has occupied the attention of New Testament scholars for

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the discussion by Robert Bratcher, "A Note on υἱὸς θεοῦ (Mark xv.39)," *ET* 68 (1956):27.

<sup>2</sup>E. C. Colwell, "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *JBL* 3 (1933):12-21; cf. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, pp. 115-16; James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols., vol. 3: *Syntax*, by Nigel Turner, p. 183. On the accuracy of Colwell's Rule, cf. Edwin A. Blum, "Studies in Problem Areas of the Greek Article" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1961), pp. 13-24.

<sup>3</sup>Bratcher, "A Note on υἱὸς θεοῦ (Mark xv. 39)," pp. 27-28. Cf. also H. A. Gry, "Son of God in Mk 15, 39," *ET* 81 (1970):151; Philip B. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *JBL* 92 (1973):79-81; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, p. 355.

almost a century.<sup>1</sup> Bieneck thinks that the Synoptic Gospels never raise the question whether one title is prior to or superior to the other. In his view both titles picture Jesus' majesty as the Son of God.<sup>2</sup> Some have attempted to connect the two titles as virtually equivalent. Longenecker, for example, says that "the primary factor in the application of the title Son of God to Jesus by the church was the conviction regarding his status as the Messiah."<sup>3</sup>

However, the present writer agrees with Cullmann that Messiah and Son of God are not equivalent terms in the Synoptics.<sup>4</sup> The title Messiah is used in the Gospels principally by human characters. But in Mark, for example, the title Son of God is the only title applied expressly to Jesus by transcendent beings (God, demons, etc.).<sup>5</sup> Son of God was not an accepted or conventional messianic title in contemporary Judaism.<sup>6</sup> In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' sonship is not identical with

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Joachim Bieneck, Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker, ATANT, pp. 45-57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, p. 96. He lists eight passages in the Gospels and Acts where the two titles are brought together: Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Mark 8:29; 14:61; Luke 4:41; John 11:27; 20:31; Acts 9:20-22 (p. 93). On the use of Son of God as a messianic title in contemporary Judaism, see Donald Juel, Messiah and Temple, SBLDS, pp. 108-14.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament, pp. 279-81; cf. Donald G. Patience, "The Contribution to Christology of the Quotations of the Psalms in the Gospels and Acts" (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1969), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, The Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup>Leon Morris, The Lord from Heaven, p. 34. For one view of the relationship of "Son of God" to the title "King of the Jews," cf. Klaus Berger, "Die königlichen Messiastraditionen des Neuen Testaments," NIS 20 (1973):24, 41.

His messiahship but rather forms the basis for it.<sup>1</sup>

The Use of the Title in Matthew

By Matthew

For Matthew "Son of God" is a "confessional" title.<sup>2</sup> Such superhuman beings as God (3:17; 17:5), Satan (4:3, 6), and demons (8:29) know that Jesus is God's Son, but this knowledge is "beyond the natural capacity of human beings," except as mockery or blasphemy (26:63; 27:40, 43).<sup>3</sup> Divine revelation is necessary in order to confess Jesus as Son of God (11:25-27; 13:11; 16:16-17; 27:54). Though the truth that Jesus is "God with us" (1:23) is not accessible to the world in general, in Matthew the "secret" of Jesus' divine sonship is "given" to the disciples (11:25-27; 13:11, 16-17).<sup>4</sup>

To some extent in Matthew Jesus is the typological recapitulation of Israel. As Messiah and Lord He sums up His people in Himself.<sup>5</sup> Hosea 11 pictures God's love for Israel and ultimately looks

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<sup>1</sup>A. Lukyn Williams, The Hebrew-Christian Messiah, p. 319. According to Joseph Lilly, "the terms 'Christ' and 'Son of God' were not synonymous to the Jews of our Lord's day" ("Jesus Christ's Revelation of His Messianic Dignity and of His Divinity," AEcR 119 [1948]:140).

<sup>2</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, Jesus Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 72. By contrast, Jesus is never confessed or addressed as the Son of Man. According to Kingsbury, this is because "Son of Man" is a "public" title, not a confessional title. Jesus uses it in His interaction with the Jewish and Gentile "world." In Matthew the titles "Son of God" and "Son of Man" converge in 25:31-46, where the future Son of Man is identified as God's own Son (cf. the use of the words "king," "My Father," and "My brothers") (ibid., p. 73).

<sup>5</sup>D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 8:91-92.

forward to the promised Ruler. Since "for Matthew Jesus himself is the locus of true Israel,"<sup>1</sup> Matthew can apply Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my Son") to Jesus as a typico-prophetic identification of God's true and unique Son.<sup>2</sup>

Matthew 2:15 represents God's acknowledgment of the newborn child Jesus as His own Son.<sup>3</sup> As Nolan says, "Only God can recognize himself."<sup>4</sup> Only the Father can legitimate His Son, and this is what God does throughout the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 2:15; 3:17; 16:17).<sup>5</sup> Matthew deliberately connects the statement of 2:15 with that of 1:22-23 so as to show that the title "Son" carries a very exclusive sense in his Christology.<sup>6</sup>

#### By God the Father

Jesus is called "My Son" by God the Father at both His baptism (Matt. 3:17) and His Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5).

At the baptism. Three signs occur at Jesus' baptism: (1) the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>On the Old Testament background of Matthew 1--2, cf. Anton Vögtle, Messias und Gottessohn, pp. 15-80. Vögtle says that the reference to Hosea 11:1 can best be understood as a reflection on the flight and return of Jesus from Egypt as a midrash on the Jacob-Laban story (Gen. 29--31) with a resulting Jacob-Israel typology being applied to Jesus (p. 47). He believes that this midrash had its origin in the Palestinian church (p. 54).

<sup>3</sup>According to Schlatter, Matthew here shows that Jesus was destined to carry out the unfulfilled mission of God's earlier son, Israel (D. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthäus, p. 42).

<sup>4</sup>Brian M. Nolan, The Royal Son of God, OBO, pp. 222-23.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>6</sup>Vögtle, p. 75.



opening of the heavens;<sup>1</sup> (2) the descent of the Spirit "as a dove," anointing Jesus as God's unique Servant;<sup>2</sup> and (3) the voice from heaven—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The divine voice is clearly the climax of the baptismal scene.<sup>3</sup> Only at His baptism and at the Transfiguration do the Synoptic Gospels mention God speaking directly to Jesus, and each time God addresses Him as "My Son."<sup>4</sup> As Edwards puts it, "Jesus is not called a friend of God like Abraham (Isa. 41:8), a servant of God like Moses (Deut. 34:5), an apostle of God like Paul (Tit. 1:1), or even a prophet. He is called a 'Son'—beloved and pleasing to God."<sup>5</sup>

According to some commentators, the heavenly voice at the baptism is the בְּרִיַת הַקוֹל, an echo-like "daughter of a voice"<sup>6</sup> that was

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Isa. 64:1. The opening of heaven may signify the beginning of a new period of God's grace, in which His Spirit returns to Israel.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Luke 4:18; Isa. 11:1-3; Psalms of Solomon 17:37; 18:7; Ethiopic Enoch 49:3; 62:2. All four Gospels note that the Spirit descended "to" or "upon" Jesus (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-33).

<sup>3</sup>On the importance of this event for a definition of the title, cf. Ben M. Elrod, "The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus as the Key to an Understanding of His Messianic Consciousness" (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1961), p. 99; Fritzeo Lentzen-Deis, Die Taufe Jesu nach den Synoptikern, FTS, pp. 282-84.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. James R. Edwards, "The Son of God: Its Antecedents in Judaism and Hellenism and Its Use in the Earliest Gospel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1978), pp. 89-97. Matthew and Luke describe the event as a more objective occurrence than does Mark, and John 1:34 testifies that John the Baptist also saw the descent of the Spirit and apparently heard the heavenly voice.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>6</sup>Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, 6 vols., 1:124-32; cf. bBerakoth 3a.

thought to be a medium through which God still spoke to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

However, Matthew clearly presents the proclamation "from the heavens" as the direct voice of God accompanied by the descent of His Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Kazmierski lists four explanations of the heavenly proclamation.<sup>3</sup> (1) It derives from Psalm 2:7 and presents Jesus as the royal Messiah. (2) It designates Jesus as a messianic High Priest, based on such passages as Malachi 1:6; Testament of Levi 4:2; 17:2; 18:6-7; Testament of Judah 24:1-3.<sup>4</sup> (3) The earlier form of the proclamation contained the designation "ὁ παῦς μου" instead of "ὁ υἱός μου," so that Jesus is presented as the Servant of Yahweh of Isaiah 42:1.<sup>5</sup> (4) It is an allusion to God's designation of Isaac as Abraham's "only son, whom you love" in Genesis 22:2, 12, 16.<sup>6</sup> Kazmierski

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent Taylor says that the sound was compared to birds chirping or doves moaning (The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 161).

<sup>2</sup>Athanasius Polag, Die Christologie der Logienquelle, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup>Carl R. Kazmierski, Jesus, the Son of God, pp. 37-60.

<sup>4</sup>"The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water]" (Testament of Levi 18:6-7). The phrase "in the water" is apparently a Christian interpolation (cf. James H. Charlesworth, ed., The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2 vols., 1:795). In Testament of Levi 8:15; 17:3; 18:13, the priestly figure is referred to as the "Beloved."

<sup>5</sup>This is supported by references to Matt. 12:18; Luke 9:35; and a variant reading at John 1:34; cf. TDNT, s.v. "παῦς θεοῦ," by Joachim Jeremias, 5 (1967):700-717; Lentzen-Deis, pp. 259-61; see also Isa. 49:3, which has certain parallels with the heavenly voices at the baptism, the Transfiguration, and John 12:28. For a refutation of this view, cf. Paul G. Bretscher, "The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew" (Th.D. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, 1966), pp. 153-62.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Ernest Best, The Temptation and the Passion, pp. 169-73. This is the closest verbal parallel to the baptismal announcement; cf.

concludes that the heavenly proclamation began in the tradition as an apocalyptic reference to Isaiah 42:1 and secondarily was reinterpreted to parallel Genesis 22 and thereby to reflect a theology of Jesus' sacrificial death.<sup>1</sup> Bretscher argues for a fifth interpretation: it pictures Jesus as the new Israel, based on God's designation of Israel as His "firstborn son" in Exodus 4:22-23. Jesus is the One in whom God is about to form a new people.<sup>2</sup>

Many critics, of course, view the baptism story as a legend. Bultmann expresses this opinion, though he concedes that possibly Jesus was actually baptized by John.<sup>3</sup> Bousset admits that the stories of the heavenly voice at the baptism and Transfiguration, though "legendary"

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also Mark 12:6; Romans 8:32.

<sup>1</sup>Kazmierski, p. 61. Lentzen-Deis also believes that Isaiah 42:1 is the primary background for the heavenly proclamation, since it emphasizes the Servant and the Spirit (p. 192); however, he concludes that the Christology of Jesus as the Servant of God does not constitute the background of the Son of God Christology, since a Son of God Christology had already been formulated before the Servant motif had taken hold (p. 261). Elsewhere Matthew 12:17-18 also refers Isaiah 42:1 to Jesus (cf. Gerhard Voss, Die Christologie der lukanischen Schriften in Grundzügen, p. 89).

<sup>2</sup>Paul G. Bretscher, "Exodus 4:22-23 and the Voice from Heaven," JBL 87 (1968):301-11; idem, "The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew," pp. 139-82; cf. G. P. H. Thompson, "Called--Proved--Obedient," JThS 11 (1960):1-12; Ulrich W. Mauser, Christ in the Wilderness, p. 96; Lentzen-Deis, pp. 184-85. Bretscher argues that the heavenly voice "asserts of Jesus what Yahweh had asserted of Israel in Exodus 4:22," for three reasons. (1) A literal translation of the Hebrew text of Exodus 4:22 reads exactly as in 2 Peter 1:17, except that "firstborn" is replaced by "beloved" and "Israel" is replaced by "this (one)." (2) "Beloved" is an expansion of "firstborn" (paralleled by Jer. 31:9, 20; 2 Esdras 6:58; Ps. Sol. 13:9). (3) The clause, "in whom I am well-pleased," suggests a contrast between Jesus and God's other son, Israel (cf. Jer. 10:14; Hab. 2:4 LXX; Mal 2:17; 1 Cor. 10:5) (Bretscher, "The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew," pp. 179-81).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, pp. 247-53.

and "mythical," were circulated already in the Palestinian primitive community.<sup>1</sup> It is not necessary, however, to deny that the story of the baptism goes back to Jesus Himself. According to Fuller, Jesus' unique sonship is presupposed and defined by the heavenly voice; an event did occur which Jesus and the church recognized as a "transcendental encounter."<sup>2</sup>

Matthew presents the heavenly statement in the third person: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (3:17). Mark and Luke, however, present it in the second person: "You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).<sup>3</sup> Vermes believes that the Matthean form is more authentic, for three reasons: (1) all three Synoptic versions of the Transfiguration give the commendation in the third person; (2) the story is similar to the Jewish קָלַ הַשָּׁמַיִם or loud voice speaking from heaven as a public or semipublic announcement; (3) Mark and Luke may have substituted "You are my beloved Son" in order to use the episode to explain Jesus' early awareness of a supernatural

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Bousset, Kyrios Christos, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, pp. 84-88. He believes, however, that Psalm 2:7 was projected backward from Christ's resurrection to His baptism and conception (Reginald H. Fuller and Pheme Perkins, Who Is This Christ?, p. 45).

<sup>3</sup>Most explains the variation as due to "Semitic approximation" (William G. Most, The Consciousness of Christ, p. 79). Many commentators assume Matthew changed the wording here to conform to the statement given at the Transfiguration (17:5). Jensen, on the other hand, suggests that Matthew may have altered the second person to third person because at the time of writing non-Christians were questioning whether anyone had really heard such a message from heaven (cf. Origen Contra Celsum 1. 41). The third person would provide the indication of a listening crowd (Ellis E. Jensen, "The Christian Defense of the Messiahship of Jesus as a Factor in the Formation of the Gospels" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1939), p. 71.

vocation<sup>1</sup> or to conform the announcement to Psalm 2:7 ("you are my son").<sup>2</sup> The statement of John the Baptist recorded in John 1:34, "This is the Son of God," may also allude to the fact that the heavenly voice was originally heard in the third person.<sup>3</sup> Any public announcement concerning Jesus' sonship could of course include a confirmation to Jesus Himself.

The relationship of the heavenly pronouncement to Old Testament parallels has created much scholarly debate. Most commentators believe the voice utters a combination of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, with echoes of Genesis 22:2 and possibly Isaiah 44:2; 62:4.<sup>4</sup> On the basis of these passages, Kingsbury says that Jesus is here depicted as "the only, or unique, Son whom God has chosen for eschatological ministry in Israel," the Davidic Messiah, the royal Son of God.<sup>5</sup> According to Groenewald the origin of the messianic interpretation of Psalm 2:7 in the early church

<sup>1</sup>Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup>Bretscher, "The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew," pp. 147-48. Bretscher suggests that Matthew recognized the Marcan form as an interpretive modification and decided to retain the original in order to reflect Exodus 4:22-23 (pp. 149-50).

<sup>3</sup>Bretscher, "Exodus 4:22-23 and the Voice from Heaven," p. 302. He says that this shows that it is not a quotation of Ps. 2:7.

<sup>4</sup>Schlatter, p. 94; Lentzen-Deis, pp. 185-91; Polag, pp. 152-53; Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, SNT, pp. 29-31, 37; I Howard Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?--A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," *NIS* 15 (1968):332; Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Literary-Critical Probe," *JSNT* 21 (1984):10; Taylor, *Mark*, 162. Cf. also T. W. Manson, "The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus," *BJRL* 34 (1952):323-25; Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>5</sup>Jack D. Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology--The End of an Era?" *Interp* 35 (1981):253; cf. Lentzen-Deis, p. 183.

was this baptismal announcement. In the heavenly voice God Himself interprets Psalm 2:7 in a messianic sense and applies the verse to Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Matthew does not intend the story to be an account of how Jesus became aware of His sonship, since here the event and announcement are even more public than in Mark.<sup>2</sup> The voice may confirm Jesus' already existing filial consciousness, but it does not install Jesus into the messianic status of Son.<sup>3</sup> There is no "adoption" of Jesus as God's Son here. As Marshall says, "The descent of the Spirit is not understood as a divine 'begetting' of Jesus (Ps. 2:7) but rather as equipping him for his task."<sup>4</sup> The distinctive aspect of the statement is the relationship of Son to Father. For Matthew it presents God's "evaluative point of view" concerning the identity of Jesus: "Jesus is his only, or unique, Son . . . whom he has chosen for eschatological ministry."<sup>5</sup> Matthew

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<sup>1</sup>E. P. Groenewald, "The Christological Meaning of John 20:31," *Neot* 2 (1968):138. On the relationship between the baptism and Psalm 2 (especially the themes of election, Spirit, and God's presence), cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theologie der Psalmen*, BKAT, p. 29. Bretscher argues, however, that the correspondences between Psalm 2:7 (in the LXX) and the heavenly words are too few to conclude that the speaker has the psalm in mind ("The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew," pp. 143-44).

<sup>2</sup>J. C. Fenton, *Saint Matthew*, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Mark*, CGTC, p. 55. According to Meyer, "my Son" does not simply name an office but has a metaphysical meaning. It shows that Jesus has come forth from the Father's being, and contains the Johannine idea, "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14; cf. Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35) (Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew*, p. 87).

<sup>4</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, p. 151.

<sup>5</sup>Kingsbury, "The Figure of Jesus," p. 10. Kingsbury adds that "My Son" goes beyond messiahship to show "the unique filial relationship that Jesus has with God" (p. 11). God Himself enters Matthew's story twice, and both times His purpose is to designate Jesus as His "beloved

probably thought of "beloved" as designating God's only Son (cf. Matt. 21:37 with Mark 12:6),<sup>1</sup> since in the Septuagint it refers to an only son who is the heir of all the concentrated love of his father (cf. Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech. 12:10).<sup>2</sup>

At His baptism, "Jesus was confirmed as the Son of God in carrying out the tasks of the Messiah and Servant of Yahweh."<sup>3</sup> Humility and service are not a denial of divinity but its product. As Crawford affirms, "Dependence is a necessary part of sonship and cannot necessarily mean inferiority."<sup>4</sup>

Ladd translates the voice as follows: "This is my only Son; him have I chosen."<sup>5</sup> He adds,

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Son" (3:17; 17:5). "If God's evaluative point of view is normative in Matthew's story, it follows that Jesus is preeminently the Son of God" (idem, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Rejoinder to David Hill," JSNT 25 [1985]:65).

<sup>1</sup>Jack D. Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of God' in Matthew's Gospel," BThB 5 (1975):10; cf. Evald Lövestam, Son and Saviour, p. 96. Joseph A. Alexander, however, says that the references to God's "own Son," "only Son," and "only begotten Son" are "coincident, though not synonymous," when applied to Christ (The Gospel According to Matthew, p. 75). Fitzmyer says "beloved" probably does not mean "only" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke [I-IX], AB, p. 486).

<sup>2</sup>Voss, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," Interp 21 (1967):100. As Lentzen-Deis puts it, Jesus is shown to be the Spirit-gifted Son of God sent as the Savior of Israel (pp. 277-79).

<sup>4</sup>R. G. Crawford, "Is Christ Inferior to God?" EvQ 43 (1971):204. In fact, however, the term Son leads to the conclusion that He will be Lord as well, since in Psalm 2:7 the one whom God designates His "son" must reign over all (Eduard Schweizer, "Gottessohn und Christus," in Theologie, p. 68).

<sup>5</sup>George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, p. 164. In the LXX ἀγαπητός means "only" in Gen. 22:2, 12, 16; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10.

Sonship and messianic status are not synonymous. Rather sonship is the prior ground and the basis of Jesus' election to fulfill his messianic office. . . . "This is my only Son" describes the permanent status of Jesus. He does not become the Son; he is the Son. Sonship is antecedent to messiahship, and not synonymous with it.<sup>1</sup>

At the Transfiguration. The Synoptic account of Jesus' Transfiguration has suffered much at the hands of New Testament critics. Bernardin suggests that the episode is a fiction of the later Jewish Christian community at Jerusalem, since it presupposes a belief in Jesus as the preexistent Messiah and God's divine Son.<sup>2</sup> In Bultmann's view the story is a legend and originally a resurrection story, though it goes back to early tradition.<sup>3</sup> Schweizer detects an apocalyptic background.<sup>4</sup> Feuillet interprets the account as a prelude to the definitive glorification of Jesus—an epiphany at which Jesus reveals His glory and manifests Himself as a transcendent Messiah, Son of God, Danielic Son of Man, Servant of Yahweh, and the Mosaic Prophet.<sup>5</sup>

Two motifs are emphasized in the story—the statement about Jesus' transformation (17:2; cf. Mark 9:2) and the proclamation of His

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph B. Bernardin, "The Transfiguration," *JBL* 52 (1933):181-89. For a discussion of the purpose and meaning of the Transfiguration in Mark, cf. G. H. Boobyer, "St. Mark and the Transfiguration," *JThS* 41 (1940):119-40.

<sup>3</sup>Bultmann, *History*, p. 259; cf. idem, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols., 1:50. However, Robert Stein has demonstrated that the Transfiguration account in Mark 9:2-8 is not simply a misplaced resurrection story ("Is the Transfiguration [Mark 9:2-8] a Misplaced Resurrection-Account?" *JBL* 95 [1976]:79-96).

<sup>4</sup>*TNTC*, s.v. "υἱός," by Eduard Schweizer, 8 (1972):369; cf. Ezek. 40:2-3; 2 Baruch 51:3-5.

<sup>5</sup>A. Feuillet, "Les Perspectives Propres á Chaque Evangéliste dans les Récits de la Transfiguration," *Bib* 39 (1958):282-83, 301.



divine sonship (17:5). The transfigured Jesus is identified as the Son of God by the voice from heaven. Hahn sees an allusion to both Isaiah 42:1 and Deuteronomy 18:15 (the Mosaic Prophet), but not to Psalm 2:7.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the divine utterance is the designation of Jesus as "My Son," but Dalman says this was extended on the lines of both Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.<sup>2</sup> Matthew alone includes "in whom I am well pleased" (17:5), whereas Luke reads "whom I have chosen" (9:35). The pronouncement must be interpreted as an exalted equivalent of the baptismal statement.

#### By Satan and demons

Satanic temptation. When Satan attempts to persuade Jesus to disobey His divine calling, he prefaces most of his temptations with the address "if you are the Son of God" (Matt. 4:3, 6; Luke 4:3, 9).<sup>3</sup> This statement would have no point unless Jesus had either made a claim to divine sonship or had accepted someone else's declaration of sonship (cf. Matt. 3:17).<sup>4</sup> As Marshall shows, "The temptation story is clearly meant to take up the ascription of sonship found in the baptismal narrative. Jesus refuses to misuse his relationship with God for his

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<sup>1</sup>Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, pp. 300, 334-37. Jesus, he says, is seen as an eschatological prophet. The reference to metamorphosis has Hellenistic connections, but the original form goes back to Palestinian tradition. The Marcan version interprets Jesus' sonship in the sense of divine being.

<sup>2</sup>Dalman, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup>For a valuable history of the interpretation of the temptation, cf. Bretscher, "The Temptation of Jesus in Matthew," pp. 1-121.

<sup>4</sup>Herbert W. Magoun, "Christ's Estimate of Himself," BS 83 (1926):14.

own ends."<sup>1</sup>

The principal term in the temptation narrative is "Son of God."<sup>2</sup> If Jesus did not know Himself to be the Son of God in a unique way, the temptations would have no significance.<sup>3</sup> The temptations make sense only on the premise that Jesus is or claims to be a divine being. "Jesus is being challenged here at the point of his deity, not of his humanity."<sup>4</sup> Some think it possible that Satan was still in some doubt of Jesus' divinity and messiahship. The word "Son" lacks the definite article but precedes the verb and is in emphatic position. Thus the emphasis is on Jesus' sonship (not His messiahship). According to Clark, "[Satan] would have him doubt the reality of his Sonship, and also distrust his Father."<sup>5</sup>

Matthew particularly emphasizes the unity of the baptism and the temptation of Jesus. He shows that "My beloved Son" in 3:17 is equivalent to "Son of God" in 4:3 by calling the Holy Spirit (3:16) the "Spirit of God" (contrast Luke 3:22). According to Przybylski, this reference to God makes it doubly clear that the "My" of "My beloved Son"

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<sup>1</sup>NIDNTT, s.v. "Son," by I. Howard Marshall, 3 (1978):643.

<sup>2</sup>Birger Gerhardsson, The Testing of God's Son (Matt 4:1-11 & par), p. 19; cf. Polag, pp. 148-51; Schlatter, pp. 102-3. What is being put to the test is Jesus' sonship (Gerhardsson, p. 20).

<sup>3</sup>Morris, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, Servant and Son, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>George W. Clark, The Gospel of Matthew, CPC, p. 53; cf. B. M. F. van Iersel, "Der Sohn" in den synoptischen Jesusworten, SNT, pp. 165-71. Cole says, "The baptism is the witness of the Father to the Son, but the temptation is the witness of the Son's own self-knowledge" (ZPEB, s.v. "Son of God," by R. Alan Cole, 5 [1976]:481).

refers to God.<sup>1</sup>

Those who wish to deny the authenticity of the temptation account usually relate it to "miracle-worker legends." Bultmann calls the story the kernel of an originally more detailed legend.<sup>2</sup> Vermes says that the close relationship of the title Son of God to the miracle-worker is shown by the fact that Satan is pictured as asking the "Son of God" to perform useless wonders, miraculous tricks, simply to prove that He could do them.<sup>3</sup> Though Schweizer denies that the title was connected with the miracle-worker in pre-Christian times, he nevertheless believes that "Satan's question presupposes a tradition in which the Son of God manifests Himself primarily by His mighty acts."<sup>4</sup>

To what extent is Satan's use of the title here related to Jesus' function as Messiah? Manson, for example, admits that the title Son of God is rare as a term for the Messiah in Jewish literature, but concludes that "it is difficult to see what else Son of God can mean in the present context."<sup>5</sup> From a broader perspective France says that Jesus is pictured as the antitype of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup>Benno Przybylski, "The Role of Mt. 3:13--4:11 in the Structure and Theology of the Gospel of Matthew," *BIThB* 4 (1974):223.

<sup>2</sup>Bultmann, *History*, pp. 253-57.

<sup>3</sup>Vermes, p. 203. Similarly Berger notes that the initial words of the temptation are posed as a condition followed by an imperative ("if you are God's Son, then do this"), which parallels both Wisdom of Solomon 2:18 ("if he is the righteous son of God") and the mocking at the cross ("if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross," Matt. 27:40). In each of these passages, the claim to be the Son of God stands in a question, with an invitation to prove the claim by showing a sign (Berger, "Die königlichen Messiastraditionen," p. 16).

<sup>4</sup>Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 377.

<sup>5</sup>T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 43.

Jesus then saw himself as God's son, undergoing prior to his great mission as Messiah the testing which God had given to his "son" Israel before the great mission of the conquest of Canaan. Israel then had failed the test; now, in Jesus, was found that true sonship which could pass the test, and be the instrument of God's purpose of blessing to the world which Old Testament Israel had failed to accomplish.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, however, the title focuses on Jesus' unique and exclusive relationship with God.<sup>2</sup> The use of the title in a conditional clause is not intended to cast doubt on the sonship of Jesus; instead the focus is on the way in which the privileges of His sonship should be used.<sup>3</sup> As Gundry says, "The Devil does not tempt Jesus to doubt his divine sonship, just pronounced at his baptism, but to rely on that sonship in self-serving ways that would lead him disobediently from the path to the cross."<sup>4</sup>

Satan's aim in his temptations is to cause Jesus to ignore God's will, follow the lure of the present age, and "betray His messianic mission of redemption."<sup>5</sup> Both Matthew and Luke show that Satan introduces two of the temptations, "If you are the Son of God," despite

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<sup>1</sup>R. T. France, Jesus and the Old Testament, p. 53. Gerhardsson suggests that the story is a Christian midrash on Deuteronomy 6--8. The narrative depends heavily on Deuteronomy 6:5 and Israel's wandering in the desert (cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 1:31; 8:2-5; Hosea 11:1). In addition, each of Jesus' three answers to Satan are direct quotations from Deuteronomy 6--8 (Gerhardsson, pp. 20-22, 78).

<sup>2</sup>Wilhelm Michaelis, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, 2 vols., 1:164; Polag, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Theology, p. 309; Elrod, "The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus," p. 99. William Hendriksen says that "Satan does not deny that Jesus is God's son but challenges him to prove it" (Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, NIC, p. 225, n. 230).

<sup>4</sup>Robert H. Gundry, Matthew, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup>Lövestam, p. 98.

differences in the order of the temptations. The intention of each of these temptations is to cause Jesus to use His position as God's Son in accordance with worldly principles. In response to the temptation to turn stones into bread, Jesus refers (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4) to Deuteronomy 8:3, which recalls how God gave manna to Israel in the wilderness in order to teach them to live by the promises and word of God. There is evidence that Jews of the period expected the miracle of the manna to be repeated in the days of the Messiah (cf. John 6:14, 30-31; 2 Baruch 29:8). John 6 relates how this miracle was accomplished in its deepest sense in the work of Jesus, the Bread of Life. Satan here apparently attempts to convince Jesus to turn away from giving the world the Bread of Life and instead to turn stones into bread in order to satisfy His own hunger (cf. Mark 14:36). The introductory clause, "If you are the Son of God," refers to the "extraordinary power and divine possibilities belonging to Jesus as the Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

In the temptation on the mountain (Matt. 4:8-11; Luke 4:5-8) Jesus is not addressed as the Son of God, since to refer to His position as God's Son would not be likely to aid in getting Jesus to submit to Satan in order to gain world dominion. However, even here a connection exists with the heavenly voice at Jesus' baptism. Psalm 2:7 ("You are my Son") is followed by 2:7-8, in which universal dominion is connected with divine sonship: "Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession." In his temptation Satan says, "All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9). If Jesus accepts Satan's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

invitation, He will receive the promised dominion (cf. Luke 4:6), but not as the Servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 42; 53). Jesus refuses the offer because the rule which belongs to Him as God's Son is not in submission to Satan but rather in victory over Satan (cf. Eph. 1:20-21; 1 Pet. 3:22) and in total obedience to the will of the Father through suffering and death.<sup>1</sup>

Demonic testimony. In Matthew the only title that the demons use of Jesus is "Son of God" (8:29). In Matthew 12:24-29 Jesus' exorcism of demons is depicted as part of a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Jesus thus battles the enemies of His Father's kingdom.<sup>2</sup> When God's Son comes into the world, He begins to silence the voice of the enemy and to set free the enemy's victims (Matt. 12:28; cf. Mark 5:7; Luke 11:20).<sup>3</sup>

By the disciples

Matthew 14:33. After Jesus walks on the water, the disciples exclaim, "Truly you are the Son of God." This is taken by many as a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101; cf. Matt. 26:53-54, where Jesus declares that He could ask "My Father" for more than twelve legions of angels to defend Him, but then the Scriptures could not be fulfilled. Similarly the mockers command Him to come down from the cross if He is really "God's Son" as He claimed (Matt. 27:40-43). but He dies as God's Servant instead. Bieneck notes that the address "If you are the Son of God" is not included in the temptation on the mountain because here Satan demands an act of submission, whereas in the first two temptations he suggests an act of power (p. 64, n. 18).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-3. Lövestam states, "As God's Son Jesus has power over the demons, and in awareness of this they tremble before him" (p. 103).

<sup>3</sup>Michaels, pp. 160-62.

Hellenistic miracle story.<sup>1</sup> But when Jesus approaches the frightened disciples, He says, "It is I; do not be afraid" (ἐγὼ εἰμι, μὴ φοβεῖσθε [v. 27]). The absolute "ἐγὼ εἰμι" ("I am") of Jesus may indicate "the self-revelation of the Father by and in the Son."<sup>2</sup> Jesus arrives on the scene in a manner similar to Old Testament descriptions of God in His majesty and supremacy (cf. Job 9:8; Ps. 77:20; Isa. 43:16). Jesus' words have the character of a "divine revelation formula" (cf. "fear not" in Gen. 26:24; 46:3). It is noteworthy that Peter responds to Jesus' "I am" with the address "Lord" (Matt. 14:28; in the Septuagint, God often speaks thus, "I am the Lord"). The words "ἐγὼ εἰμι" imply here that Jesus is one with the Lord who has authority over the waters.<sup>3</sup>

The confession by the disciples that Jesus is the Son of God is given only in Matthew, which is also the only Gospel that describes Jesus' saving of Peter as he attempts to walk on the water himself (14:28-31). The disciples' confession (14:33) is therefore probably related to this incident. Jesus reveals Himself as the divine Savior who rescues His people from all the powers of evil, while at the same time having absolute authority and power.<sup>4</sup> As Matthew relates, the disciples perceive Jesus to be a divine Being, and as a result they

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<sup>1</sup>Bultmann, Theology, pp. 50-51, 128-30; for a criticism of this view, see Bieneck, pp. 70-72; Fuller, Mission, pp. 80-82; Cullmann, pp. 277-79.

<sup>2</sup>Lövestam, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.; cf. Hahn, p. 303; Jack D. Kingsbury, Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>Lövestam, p. 106.

"worship" Him (cf. Matt. 28:9, 17).<sup>1</sup>

Matthew 16:16. The authenticity of Matthew 16:16 is strongly debated.<sup>2</sup> Dalman says that since neither Luke nor Mark include the term "Son of God," and since "Christ" is the expected term for a Jew to use at that period, Matthew's use of "Son of the living God" is an expansion on the original saying.<sup>3</sup> Bultmann claims that Peter's confession is an Easter story projected backward into Jesus' lifetime.<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer thinks that verses 16b-19 originated after the resurrection, when the title "Son of the living God" was added to "the Christ" as a description of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Vermes suggests further that Jesus rejected the title, "Messiah"

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<sup>1</sup>Edward P. Blair, Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, pp. 65-66. Carson says that the disciples probably used the title here in a messianic sense, but with superficial comprehension (p. 345). Dalman contends that since Mark 6:51-52 reports no statement by the disciples following the calming of the storm, the statement in Matthew is not authentic (p. 274). Floyd V. Filson, however, supports the authenticity of this passage (A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 174). He notes that in Matthew Jesus is the Son of God from birth (2:15), and that already the heavenly voice (3:17), the demons (8:29), and Jesus Himself (11:27) have spoken of His divine sonship. The disciples did not think of Jesus as simply a good man at this point. On the possible designation of Jesus as Son of God because of His miracles, cf. Paul J. Achtemeier, "Gospel Miracle Tradition and the Divine Man," Interp 26 (1972):175-97.

<sup>2</sup>In favor of authenticity, see Ben F. Meyer, The Aims of Jesus, pp. 189-93; Carson, pp. 365-66; Guthrie, p. 305; see also Edward A. McDowell, Son of Man and Suffering Servant, pp. 92-96; A. W. Argyle, The Gospel According to Matthew, CBC, p. 7. The authenticity of the passage is supported by the details of verses 17-19, by the occurrence of the title Son of God elsewhere in Matthew, and by the fact that the Matthaean form best explains the existence of the forms found in Mark and Luke.

<sup>3</sup>Dalman, p. 274.

<sup>4</sup>Bultmann, Theology, 1:26.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, A Christological Catechism--New Testament Answers, p. 46.



Son of God," with the result that the statement was inserted here because the early church needed a messianic confession of faith.<sup>1</sup> It is clear, however, that each of these negations is based on invalid presuppositions concerning what Jesus may or may not have said or accepted.<sup>2</sup> Strongly in favor of the authenticity of the passage is the fact that Jesus clearly called Himself the Son of the Father in Matthew 11:27 and the presence of the tradition concerning the heavenly voice in all three Synoptic Gospels.

The presence of the titles "Christ" and "Son of God" together in Matthew 16:16 has led some commentators to view them here as synonyms.<sup>3</sup> However, that they are distinct terms is shown by the meaning of "Son of God" in 14:33. Since earlier in Matthew the title refers to Jesus' unique nature and filial relationship to the Father, it must have the same meaning here.<sup>4</sup> In Matthew the concept of the virgin conception and the title Immanuel ("God with us," 1:23) indicate a sonship of essential deity.<sup>5</sup> Here 16:17 shows that since Jesus belongs to the sphere of deity, only deity can know and reveal the truth about Him.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vermes, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>For rabbinic parallels to Peter's statement, cf. Schlatter, p. 504.

<sup>3</sup>Schedl, for example, says that differences between the Synoptic parallels and the fact that Matthew is the only writer to include the title Son of God here shows that this title was understood as simply an approximate synonym of Messiah (Claus Schedl, Zur Christologie der Evangelien, p. 193).

<sup>4</sup>Filson, p. 185; cf. A. Lukyn Williams, The Hebrew-Christian Messiah, p. 317.

<sup>5</sup>Gundry, Matthew, p. 330.

<sup>6</sup>Blair, p. 66; cf. the heavenly voice at the baptism and the

Since the title Son of God was not an essential attribute of the Messiah in Judaism,<sup>1</sup> Jesus' response to Peter's confession as a revelation from the Father must refer only to the identification of Jesus as "the Son of the living God." This is further seen in Mark's and Luke's omission of both the title Son of God and Jesus' reference to divine revelation.<sup>2</sup> Since for the Jews the title Messiah did not commonly connote divinity,<sup>3</sup> in his confession Peter adds the title "Son of the living God" to express his view of Jesus' true nature. "Christ" is a designation of office, but "Son of God" is a designation of nature.<sup>4</sup>

By mockers

Matthew is the only Synoptic writer who reports the use of the title Son of God by Jesus' Jewish enemies.<sup>5</sup> In 27:40 the passersby challenge Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In 27:43 the chief priests and elders mock Him: "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

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Transfiguration, the demonic testimony, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Watson, An Exposition of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 170; cf. Thomas Schultz, "The Doctrine of the Person of Christ with an Emphasis upon the Hypostatic Union" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1962), p. 183.

<sup>5</sup>Vermes, p. 204. Fuller believes that this is the only clearly redactional use of the title in Matthew (Fuller and Perkins, p. 85).

Some commentators see a relationship between the words of the passersby and the statement concerning the suffering righteous man in Wisdom of Solomon 2:16-18. Schweizer, for example, says that the chief priests mock Jesus because "He regarded Himself as the Son of God like the suffering righteous in Wis. 2:18."<sup>1</sup> There is certainly a similarity between the Wisdom passage in which God's enemies question whether God will uphold His "son" and Matthew's reference to the mockery at the cross (Matt. 27:43). However, there is no mention in Wisdom that the "son's" suffering is vicarious or redemptive.<sup>2</sup>

The taunt by the mockers indicates, however, that Jesus had claimed to have a special relationship to God so that He had supernatural power (cf. the temptations by Satan). Clearly "the people believed that Jesus claimed to be not only Messiah but also the Son of God."<sup>3</sup> It is also clear that if the mockers were thinking strictly of Jesus' messianic claims and miracles, they would have used the more common title "Messiah" or "Christ." The double reference to Jesus' claim to divine sonship shows that they had understood His self-designation as something more than messiahship (cf. John 5:18; 10:33, 36).

#### By soldiers

Matthew relates that the soldiers who crucified Jesus became "very frightened" when they saw the earthquake and other supernatural

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<sup>1</sup>Schweizer, "υιός," p. 378.

<sup>2</sup>Erminie Huntress, "'Son of God' in Jewish Writings Prior to the Christian Era," *JBL* 54 (1935):123.

<sup>3</sup>Ladd, p. 163.

events (rocks splitting, tombs opening, darkness at midday, etc.) so that they said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). This is individualized in Mark as the personal utterance of the centurion, and will be dealt with in detail at that point.

### The Use of the Title in Mark

#### By Mark

Mark 1:1 is both the topic sentence and the title of Mark's Gospel, though it is connected to the introduction of John the Baptist in the verses that follow.<sup>1</sup> Mark states simply that the beginning of the gospel about Jesus is to be found in the history of Jesus as Mark unfolds it.<sup>2</sup> Verse 1 is followed by the conjunction "as," which in Mark is never used as the beginning of a sentence,<sup>3</sup> so that here "as it is written" apparently links the title with the appearance of John the Baptist, who is introduced by quotations from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.<sup>4</sup> John's appearance in the desert is the "beginning" of the gospel in the sense that his preaching looks forward to the life and passion of Jesus, which are the contents of Mark's Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. a similar style in Prov. 1:1; Eccles. 1:1; Song of Sol. 1:2; Hosea 1:2.

<sup>2</sup>Kazmierski, p. 13; cf. Wolfgang Feneberg, Der Markusprolog, p. 152. Grundmann says that the beginning of Mark's Gospel shows that his "redactional principle" is Christological (Walter Grundmann, Das Evangelium nach Markus, THNT, p. 11).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Schweizer, Mark, p.30; in addition, in the New Testament the phrase "as it is written" usually serves as a connective between an assertion and a supporting Old Testament quotation which follows.

<sup>4</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>Kazmierski, pp. 23-24.

The fact that both  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$  and  $\nu\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  are used in verse 1 without an article probably indicates that both Christological titles are related to the name Jesus as genitives of apposition.<sup>1</sup> Each title qualifies Jesus as the object of Mark's "Gospel." Thus in verse 1 Mark is tracing the gospel about Jesus as Christ and Son of God back to its "beginning" in the appearance of John the Baptist.<sup>2</sup>

The various editions of the Greek New Testament are divided over the question of the authenticity of the reference to  $\nu\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  [ $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ ]  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  at the end of Mark 1:1. The Textus Receptus accepts it, but the most recent editions by Nestle and the United Bible Societies enclose it in brackets as doubtful.<sup>3</sup> Schweizer believes that it was added later by a copyist, though he admits that it fits Mark's linguistical style.<sup>4</sup> The reading is supported in some form by Codex Vaticanus and a correction in Codex Sinaiticus (both fourth century A.D.), Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Cantabrigiensis, most Old Latin manuscripts, and a large number of other early texts, including references by Irenaeus and Origen in Latin. The vast majority of manuscripts contain the reading. Only Codex Sinaiticus, several versions, some Greek and Latin manuscripts of Irenaeus and Origen, and several other Fathers omit the reading.

On the basis of Marcan usage one must conclude that the divine sonship of Jesus is an important theme for Mark. The confession of

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<sup>1</sup>I.e., "the Gospel of Jesus [who is] Christ [and] Son of God." See also Leander E. Keck, "The Introduction to Mark's Gospel," NIS 12 (1966):352-70.

<sup>2</sup>Kazmierski, pp. 25-26.

<sup>3</sup>GNT, p. 118; NTG, p. 88.

<sup>4</sup>Schweizer, Mark, p.30.

Peter to Jesus' messiahship in 8:29 corresponds to the centurion's confession of His divine sonship in 15:39, which makes the same double ascription in the title very likely.<sup>1</sup> The reading "Son of God" in Mark 1:1 should therefore be accepted as genuine, on the basis of five lines of evidence. First, its textual support is varied and early, with wide distribution. Second, the more limited support for its omission suggests that the omission originated as a scribal homoioteleuton. Third, the form of the phrase υἱοῦ θεοῦ, without articles, suggests its originality. Fourth, the title "Son of God" summarizes and introduces an important theme of Mark's Gospel. Fifth, the literary form of verse 1, including the Son of God reading, parallels other superscriptions found in the Septuagint (e.g., Hos. 1:1-2; Zeph. 1:1).<sup>2</sup> Cranfield and Lane likewise strongly support the authenticity of the reading.<sup>3</sup> Most contemporary scholars appear to accept it.<sup>4</sup>

"Son of God" is clearly Mark's most important title for Jesus.<sup>5</sup> "Jesus Christ" occurs only once in Mark, "Jesus" occurs eighty-two times, "Christ" eight times, and "Son" or "Son of God" nine times. The presence of the title Son of God in the prologue gives emphasis to the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Kazmierski, p. 8. Kazmierski argues that the root of the omission lies in Egypt with Origen, which then found its way into the Caesarean text type. The omission of υἱοῦ θεοῦ occurred by homoioteleuton.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander Globe, "The Caesarean Omission of the Phrase 'Son of God' in Mark 1:1," *HThR* 75 (1982):211-28.

<sup>3</sup>Cranfield, p. 38; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p. 41, n. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98; Feneberg, p. 155. "Son of God" is the title that best defines Mark's conception of "Messiah."

importance of Jesus' divine sonship for Mark. The precise meaning of the title must be determined by its use throughout the Gospel; but it has already been shown that Mark presents Jesus as the essentially divine Son who is obedient till death.<sup>1</sup>

#### By God the Father

At the baptism. The expression "My Son" in Mark 1:11 has traditionally been considered as an allusion to Psalm 2:7.<sup>2</sup> And scholars generally agree that in all the Synoptics the last part of the proclamation has a connection with Isaiah 42:1. Some argue, however, that "Son" here also originated in the "Servant" of Isaiah 42:1.<sup>3</sup> Dalman says that the ambiguity of the term παῦς in the LXX of Isaiah 42:1 for "servant" led to the application of Isaiah 42:1 to the "son" in Psalm 2:7; both passages are then linked in Mark 1:11 and applied to Jesus as both Son and Servant.<sup>4</sup> Bousset suggests instead that the original form of the saying had παῦς instead of υἱός, so that the saying originally was based only on Isaiah 42:1 and did not refer to Jesus as the Son.<sup>5</sup> Jeremias has advanced a similar theory, with the following arguments: (1) the term παῦς can mean either "servant" or "child"; (2) the occurrence of ἐκλεκτός as a variant reading in John 1:34 points to Isaiah 42:1 as the basic source of the baptismal saying; (3) ἀγαπητός

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<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 218-25.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hans-Jorg Steichele, Der leidende Sohn Gottes, pp. 135-48.

<sup>3</sup>Lövestam, p. 94; cf. Steichele, pp. 123-35.

<sup>4</sup>Dalman, pp. 276-80.

<sup>5</sup>Bousset, p. 97, n. 70.

can be a translation variant for ἐκλεκτός, as seen in the citation of Isaiah 42:1 in Matthew 12:18 (cf. Luke 9:35); (4) the descent of the Spirit on Jesus has antecedents in Isaiah 42:1b.<sup>1</sup>

Carrying the idea further, Michel says, "Perhaps the words of God recorded in all the Gospels in their accounts of the baptism (Mark 1:11 par.) form the real source of all the statements about the Son, the Servant, the Beloved or the elect One." He suggests that the  $\text{בְּרִיךְ}$  tradition was the original one, so that υἱός represents  $\text{בְּרִיךְ}$  and the background is Isaiah 42:1.<sup>2</sup> Fuller claims that the clause "in You I am well pleased" is derived from the Hebrew text, not from the Septuagint. The term "my Son," he says, represents an original "my servant," so that "in its original Palestinian form we may suppose that the baptism narrative expressed a 'paidology' based on Isa. 42:1."<sup>3</sup>

However, in Jewish Hellenistic literature following the Septuagint, the Servant of Isaiah is rendered not by υἱός but by παῦς. Some argue that since παῦς means either "servant" or "child," υἱός may have replaced an original παῦς ("servant," Isa. 42:1) in the heavenly voice. However, since Isaiah 42:1 is rendered with παῦς in Matthew 12:18, it is unlikely that such a substitution was made in the tradition

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<sup>1</sup>Joachim Jeremias, Abba, pp. 191-216; see Gundry (Use of the Old Testament, pp. 29-32) for a contrary discussion of the issues.

<sup>2</sup>However, Luke 3:22 D and Justin Martyr here quote Ps. 2:7 verbatim instead, suggesting that the Son tradition is original. Marshall says that Justin and the D copyist apparently correctly recognized in Luke 3:22 an early and original allusion to Ps. 2:7, so that "from the beginning the text confirmed God's recognition of Jesus as his Son" (NIDNIT, s.v. "Son," by Otto Michel and I. H. Marshall, 3 [1978]:641).

<sup>3</sup>Reginald H. Fuller, The Foundations of New Testament Christology, p. 170.



underlying all the Synoptics. In fact Matthew 4:3 presupposes the term "Son." Schweizer also discounts the connection with Isaiah 42:1 by pointing out that εὐδοκεῖν ἐν is not found in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 42:1. Instead he says that the best parallel for εὐδοκέω is in 2 Samuel 22:20 (LXX), where it refers to David.<sup>1</sup>

The emphatic and repeated address, "If you are the Son of God," in the temptation narratives in Matthew and Luke must refer back to the heavenly voice at the baptism.<sup>2</sup> And as Hahn admits, the Servant of God concept is not sufficient to explain the early history of the title Son of God.<sup>3</sup> There is no trace of any other understanding of the passage in early Christianity than what the Synoptics relate.<sup>4</sup> The same statement is given at the Transfiguration, and the common interpretation by the early fathers refers to Psalm 2:7. Even if there is a strong allusion to Isaiah 42:1 in the text, other parallels may be more important. The descent of the Spirit may contain an allusion to Psalm 2:2, where the

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<sup>1</sup>Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 368.

<sup>2</sup>Cranfield, pp. 54-55. The essential elements of the episode are found not only in both Matthew and Luke but also in John 1:32-34 (Steichele, p. 113; Lars Hartman, "Taufe, Geist und Sohnschaft," in Jesus in der Verkündigung der Kirche, pp. 89-109). According to Steichele, Mark 1:10-11 combines the opening of heaven, the descent of the Spirit, and the voice from heaven into an eschatological event (p. 120).

<sup>3</sup>Hahn, p. 280. Martin Hengel says that the idea that "my Son" has suppressed an original "my servant" is "questionable in the extreme" (The Son of God, p. 66).

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 327. Luke 9:35 and John 1:34 cannot be used to argue that υἱός in Mark 1:11 is not original, since the former have a variant for ἀγαπητός, not for υἱός. In John 1:34 the variant ἐκλεκτός must be taken as modifying an original υἱός, says Marshall, rather than παῖς, in view of John's usage elsewhere. However, the υἱός reading has by far the strongest early manuscript support (ibid., p. 328).

King is the Lord's "anointed" (cf. also the citation from Isa. 61:1 in Luke 4:18). The word υἱός is unattested in any version of Isaiah 42:1. The Hebrew word עֶבֶד in Isaiah 42:1 virtually always means "servant," and would never be translated as υἱός.<sup>1</sup> Marshall says that "ambiguity was possible only on Greek soil as a result of the genuine double meaning of παῖς."<sup>2</sup> But the correct interpretation of עֶבֶד was known and maintained by Greek-speaking Jews, who began to translate the term as δοῦλος in the second century A.D.<sup>3</sup> Luke understands παῖς to mean "servant," since he uses παῖς and δοῦλος interchangeably in Luke 7:1-10. The meaning of παῖς as a title must be "servant" (as in Matt. 12:18; Luke 1:54, 69; Acts 4:25). When used of Jesus in Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30, it probably has the same meaning.<sup>4</sup> Marshall concludes that "there is no reason to believe that παῖς has been replaced by υἱός in the original form of the baptismal saying."<sup>5</sup>

What does the heavenly voice mean, then, when it calls Jesus "My Son"? Fitzmyer bluntly says that it clearly does not refer to the "eternal Sonship" of Jesus, since that would be an anachronism from

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<sup>1</sup>The only exception in the LXX is in Deut. 32:43, where a different Hebrew text is followed.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 329; cf. Steichele, pp. 125-26.

<sup>3</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 330.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 332; cf. the allusion to Isa. 52:13 in Acts 3:13, 26.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.; cf. Douglas J. Moo, The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives, p. 157; Barnabas Lindars, New Testament Apologetic, p. 140.

later Trinitarian theology.<sup>1</sup> Wrede suggests that "Son" here is a "designation for the supernatural nature of Jesus which has come into being through his receiving the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> From a different perspective, Michaels decides that the heavenly proclamation is parabolic, in that the Father says to Jesus, "You are the son of Genesis 22:1-14" in a "typical" sense. He thinks that by a process of audience identification, Jesus begins to think of Himself as an only son (just as Isaac was Abraham's only or beloved son) who is being set apart to God for a special purpose. The heavenly voice then supplies the key for Jesus' self-identification.<sup>3</sup>

It seems clear, however, that Jesus was already conscious of His divine sonship before His baptism (cf. Luke 2:49). According to Stonehouse, "Jesus did not any more become the Son of God at the baptism through the pronouncement of the words, 'Thou art my beloved Son,' than he became Son again at the transfiguration when the divine voice declared, 'This is my beloved Son.'"<sup>4</sup> Instead, Mark 1:11 shows that "Son of God" will be the "normative" title for Jesus in Mark's Gospel, highlighting the unique filial relationship of Jesus to God.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that Mark attaches "extreme importance" to the events surrounding Jesus' baptism is seen from the fact that God Himself here

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<sup>1</sup>Fitzmyer, Luke, p. 486.

<sup>2</sup>William Wrede, The Messianic Secret, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup>Michaels, pp. 39-40, 101-7.

<sup>4</sup>Ned B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ, pp. 18-19; cf. Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 66. This is God's evaluative point of view, which agrees with Mark's own evaluative statement in 1:1.

enters his story as an "actor."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore striking that there is little stress on the messiahship of Jesus in the baptism account. In fact, as Goppelt says, the heavenly voice shows that Jesus is the Son of God "in a way distinct from Israel, the king of Israel, the pious, or even the messianic King."<sup>2</sup> "My Son" here is not a messianic title, but rather transcends messiahship to signify Jesus' unique relationship with the Father.<sup>3</sup> Jesus' messiahship is subordinate to His sonship. "Jesus is the Messiah because he is the Son of God rather than vice versa."<sup>4</sup> There are obviously similarities between the concepts of Son and Servant, but both are possible only because of Jesus' sonship.

The word ἀγαπητός in the Septuagint means "only" when used of a son or daughter, and is used three times in Genesis 22 for an "only son" (vv. 2, 12, 16; cf. Judg. 11:34; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10).<sup>5</sup> It may be equivalent to μονογενής, since in the Septuagint both terms are translations of Hebrew יָחִיד (cf. also Pss. 22:20; 25:16; 35:17; 68:6).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.; cf. Lentzen-Deis, pp. 279-80. Aside from the first verse, this is the first identification of Jesus in Mark (Alfred Suhl, Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium, p. 103).

<sup>2</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols., 1:201. There is also clearly no connection with the "divine man" concept (Philipp Vielhauer, Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament, p. 206).

<sup>3</sup>William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, NICNT, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," Interp 21 (1967):99; cf. Joachim Bieneck, Sohn Gottes als Christusbezeichnung der Synoptiker, ATANT, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup>J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 229.

<sup>6</sup>Voss, p. 88. Steichele prefers to see a relationship with the word "chosen" in Isaiah 42:1 (pp. 128-30), which he connects with the descent of the Spirit (pp. 132-34).

This indicates that an Abraham-Isaac typology (Gen. 22) may lie behind the intent of the heavenly designation (cf. Testament of Levi 18:6). The intimate, filial love of Abraham for Isaac typifies the affection and unity between the heavenly Father and His Son expressed at the baptism.<sup>1</sup> The term ἀγαπητός is used indirectly by Jesus of Himself in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mark 12:6; Luke 20:13).

Robinson believes that "the Beloved" is a separate title for the Messiah, noting that the Old Syriac version renders the heavenly proclamation as "My Son and My Beloved."<sup>2</sup> According to Calvin the best interpreter of the passage is Paul who writes in Ephesians 1:6 that believers have obtained God's love through the beloved Son.<sup>3</sup>

At the baptism of Jesus, however, ἀγαπητός is closely linked to "My Son" and is not a separate title. The Targum on Psalm 2:7 paraphrases, "Beloved as a son to his father you are to me." A more direct background for ἀγαπητός may actually be the description of Isaac in Genesis 22:2, 12, 16 (LXX)—ὁ υἱὸς σου ὁ ἀγαπητός.<sup>4</sup> The heavenly voice therefore emphasizes the uniqueness of the Father-Son relationship, and Jesus' genuine divine sonship is presupposed (as in Mark 1:1).

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<sup>1</sup>Josef Blank, "Die Sendung des Sohnes," in Neues Testament und Kirche, p. 36; cf. Rom. 4:24; 8:32; Heb. 11:17-19; Epistle of Barnabas 7:3, where the sacrifice of Isaac is seen to some degree as a prefigurement of the sacrifice of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup>J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke, 3 vols., 1:132-33; see also Bretscher, "Exodus 4:22-23 and the Voice from Heaven," p. 310, who concludes that the root term standing behind both "beloved" and "only-begotten" is the word "firstborn" in Exod. 4:22.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 334.

There is a contrast between the two clauses of the heavenly proclamation. The first describes an essential relationship, without reference to origin. The second describes a past choice for the performance of a specific function (servanthood or messiahship).<sup>1</sup> According to Stonehouse the relationship of the two clauses is "resultative"; because of His unique sonship Jesus has been chosen for the task that is before Him.<sup>2</sup> The verb in the first clause is in the present tense; in the second clause the verb is aorist. Lane paraphrases the passage thus: "Because you are my unique Son, I have chosen you for the task upon which you are about to enter."<sup>3</sup>

The last part of the pronouncement has no parallel in Psalm 2.<sup>4</sup> The terms of the statement recall Isaiah 42:1-2 as cited in Matthew 12:18.<sup>5</sup> The Targum on Isaiah 43:10 paraphrases "my servant whom I have chosen" as "my servant, the anointed, in whom I am well-pleased."<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>Stonehouse, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Lane, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 334. In 2 Sam. 22:20 David says that the Lord "delighted in me"; however, there is no indication in the New Testament that this passage was influential. The wording of Isa. 42:1 in the LXX is divergent at this point, but the meaning is similar and the heavenly saying need not be dependent on the LXX (ibid.). Isaiah 42:1 is interpreted messianically and linked with Ps. 2:7 in the Midrash on Psalm 2:7.

<sup>5</sup>"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles." Cf. Lentzen-Deis, pp. 191-93.

<sup>6</sup>Dalman, p. 277. In the Peshitta, the word *naūs* in Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30 is rendered "son"; cf. 1 Clement 59:2-4; Didache 9:2-3; 10:2, 6; Wisdom of Solomon 2:13-20. In Acts 4:25, however, David is also called God's *naūs* (Dalman, p. 278).

Acts 4:27 Jesus is called "your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed." If there is an allusion here to Isaiah 42:1, it appears to add a connotation of servanthood, obedience, and suffering to Jesus' sonship.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Jesus' sonship is confirmed and publicly announced, He dedicates Himself through John's baptism to His mission as the Servant of Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> As Cole puts it, the baptism of Jesus "represents the public acceptance by Jesus of the path of sonship, which will, because it is the path of obedience, lead to suffering as surely as the path of messiahship."<sup>3</sup>

Marshall and Kingsbury therefore correctly conclude that Psalm 2:7; Genesis 22:2; and Isaiah 42:1 must be regarded as the conceptual background for an interpretation of the heavenly saying in its three main components: "You are My Son," "beloved," and "I am well-pleased."<sup>4</sup> The voice announces that Jesus as God's only Son is the royal Messiah (Ps. 2:7; cf. Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5) who will at the same time fulfill the task of the Servant of Yahweh (Isa. 42:1; cf. 52:13—53:12). This applies as well to the heavenly proclamation at the Trans-

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<sup>1</sup>Fitzmyer, *Luke*, p. 486; cf. Bieneck, pp. 58-69.

<sup>2</sup>Cranfield, p. 55; Walter Grundmann notes that this combining of messiahship with servanthood is profoundly distinct from Hellenistic concepts (p. 34).

<sup>3</sup>Cole, p. 481; cf. Best, pp. 148-49, who says that for Mark the dominant theme here is Jesus' sonship rather than His servanthood.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 335; Kingsbury, *Christology of Mark's Gospel*, p. 65; cf. Erich Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium*, pp. 9-10; Steichele, pp. 109-61; Hartman, p. 90. Hartman also suggests the possibility of an "Exodus typology" (p. 92).

figuration.<sup>1</sup>

The baptismal saying contains an expression of the basis for Jesus' personal relationship of Sonship to God the Father. It goes beyond a purely functional or messianic use of the title by the use of the qualifying adjective ἀγαπητός which indicates the unique relationship of Jesus to His Father.<sup>2</sup>

The personal relationship expressed in Genesis 22 is linked with ideas of messiahship and servanthood. "As the Son of God, Jesus is the Messiah, and the task to which He is appointed is that of the Servant."<sup>3</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by the temptation narrative. Jesus is tempted as the Son, and Satan attempts "to destroy the relationship of trust and obedience between Jesus and His Father."<sup>4</sup>

At the Transfiguration. In Mark the heavenly voice at the baptism was to some extent directed to Jesus ("You are My Son"). At the Transfiguration, however, the proclamation is directed to the three disciples, to reveal and confirm His divine sonship to them ("This is my beloved Son . . . Hear Him"). As Edwards says, "Only the Father can impart the mystery of Jesus' divine Sonship to men."<sup>5</sup> The Transfiguration clarifies the term "Christ" (cf. Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20) with respect to Jesus. By nature He is God's beloved (only) Son, possessing and revealing God's glory. By function He is presently God's

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<sup>1</sup>Lövestam, p. 97; cf. Best, pp. 169-72; Birger Gerhardsson, "Gottes Sohn als Diener Gottes," *StTh* 27 (1973):74-75; Taylor, p. 162; Vermes, pp. 205, 264.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?", p. 336.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 336; cf. Lövestam, pp. 98-101.

<sup>5</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 141; cf. Matt. 16:17; 2 Pet. 1:17-18; on the command "Hear Him," cf. Deut. 18:15; 1 Macc. 2:65.



suffering Servant, who will die (Luke 9:31) and rise again (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9).<sup>1</sup>

At the crucifixion. Rachel King suggests that God directly revealed that Jesus was His unique Son three times: at His baptism, at His Transfiguration, and at His death when God tore the veil of the temple from top to bottom. God, she says, using a customary Jewish mourning gesture, did "what any devoted Jewish father, standing by the deathbed of a beloved son, would have done: he rent His garments."<sup>2</sup> The moment Jesus died, God answered the taunt of the priests by the decisive gesture of the torn veil (Mark 15:37-38).

The phrases "was torn" and "from top to bottom" show that Mark is describing the incident as God's own action. It thus represents the self-disclosure and revelation of God Himself. But the purpose of the theophany is to provide a Christophany. In His death Jesus shows His true identity (Son of God, Mark 15:39), and the effect is that of God revealing His holiest mystery (the tearing of the veil).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 143; cf. also Suhl, pp. 104-10; Walter L. Liefeld, "Theological Motifs in the Transfiguration Narrative," in New Dimensions in New Testament Study, p. 176. According to Suhl the Transfiguration of Jesus and the heavenly voice serve to legitimate Jesus as God's Son to the disciples (p. 107). On possible Old Testament allusions, cf. Steichele, pp. 161-91. Steichele rules out Isaiah 42:1 as a possible background (p. 185). Instead he thinks that the Transfiguration tradition uses the title Son to denote an appointment of Jesus to an exalted position (p. 189).

<sup>2</sup>Rachel H. King, "The Torn Veil: A Sign of Sonship," CTo, March 29, 1974, p. 723; for another view, cf. Lentzen-Deis, pp. 280-82.

<sup>3</sup>Harry L. Chronis, "The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39," JBL 101 (1982):109-11.

By demons

The demons use only two titles for Jesus: "Son of (the most High) God" and "Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24; cf. John 6:69; 10:36). These designations emphasize the unique distinction Jesus has (in their view) from all other creatures.<sup>1</sup> Usually Jesus commands them to be silent and not to make Him known (Mark 2:25; 3:12). For the demons, Jesus as Son of God is the One who has power and authority over them. They beg Him not to torment them (Mark 5:7-8; cf. Luke 8:28-29), and He casts them out. Jesus as Son of God is their master (Mark 5:6, 10; cf. Luke 8:28, 31). In Mark 1:24, when the demon asks Jesus, "Have you come to destroy us?" he recognizes not only that he has met his match, but also that "the end of the whole cosmic struggle of Satan and his hosts against God is now certain to end in the defeat of the demonic powers."<sup>2</sup>

The recognition of Jesus as God's Son by the demons was direct and immediate. As Ladd says, "It was not acquired, inferential knowledge," based on "observation and interpretation of Jesus' words" and actions. It was "intuitive recognition of a supernatural kind."<sup>3</sup>

The "Holy One of God" is not a known messianic title (cf. John 6:69). In Mark 1:24 it is equivalent to "Son of God."<sup>4</sup> It probably derives from the Old Testament designation of God as the Holy One (cf.

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, p. 285; cf. Bieneck, pp. 46-48; Lövestam, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Howard C. Kee, "The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories," NIS 14 (1968):243.

<sup>3</sup>Ladd, p. 165.

<sup>4</sup>Cranfield, p. 77.

Isa. 40:25; 57:15).<sup>1</sup>

In Mark 5:7 a demon addresses Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God." The expression "Most High God" is common in the Septuagint and in ancient Judaism as a term emphasizing God's transcendence.<sup>2</sup> The demons thus label Jesus as One who is uniquely related to the transcendent God, with supreme power over all His enemies.<sup>3</sup>

Three times in Mark (1:25, 34; 3:12), twice in Luke (4:35, 41), and once in Matthew (12:16), Jesus commands demons to be silent after they have recognized Him. Bieneck calls this the "Son of God secret" (rather than the "messianic secret").<sup>4</sup> Wrede maintains that these warnings are later additions which attempt to explain why the earthly life of Jesus supposedly appears to be devoid of outward messianic claims.<sup>5</sup> But this view has generally been rejected because it fails to do justice to the messianic nature of Jesus' life and teachings as related in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>6</sup> In His self-presentation to Israel, Jesus emphasized two things: His messianic authority and power, and His

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<sup>1</sup>Ladd, p. 165. Best says that the term "Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24) may show a contrast with the term "unclean spirit" that Mark uses for demons, thereby emphasizing the difference between Jesus and the demons (p. 16).

<sup>2</sup>BAGD, 5th rev. ed., s.v. "ὑψιστος," p. 850. The term "son of the Most High" is also found in 4QpsDan Aa and Sirach 4:10.

<sup>3</sup>Note that this exorcism occurs in a pagan land, implying universal power and authority; cf. Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 121; Steichele, pp. 280-84.

<sup>4</sup>Bieneck, pp. 46-48.

<sup>5</sup>Wrede, pp. 24-81 passim.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Ladd, pp. 169-71; Ralph Martin, Mark: Evangelist and Theologian, pp. 148-49.

servanthood as the Lamb of God. In seeking subjects for His messianic kingdom, Jesus refused those who came because of amazement or selfishness (cf. John 6:15, 26). The demons were therefore silenced because they were confessing His nature and mission without any intention of permanent submission either to Him or to His Father.<sup>1</sup> Jesus did not accept their testimony because it did not come from revelation and faith. In addition the testimony of demons was not helpful in Jesus' ongoing proclamation of the kingdom. The Gospel writers included it, however, because it represented supernatural testimony to the identity of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

#### By a centurion

The Roman centurion's confession of Jesus as "Son of God" is the only direct confession of Jesus' sonship by a mere human in the Gospel of Mark. It is significant that in Mark the centurion's confession surpasses anything uttered by Peter himself and asserts what the high priest has already called blasphemous (14:64).<sup>3</sup> Jesus is condemned to death because He affirms that He is the Son of God; here, as soon as Jesus dies the centurion affirms that He was in truth God's Son.<sup>4</sup>

Many scholars conclude that it is not possible to know for sure what the centurion actually meant by his statement.<sup>5</sup> He may have

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Cole, p. 481.

<sup>3</sup>Taylor, p. 598.

<sup>4</sup>Kingsbury, Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Best, p. 168; Cranfield, p. 460; John Pobee, "The Cry of the Centurion—a Cry of Defeat," in The Trial of Jesus, p. 100.

intended to classify Jesus among the Hellenistic "divine men."<sup>1</sup> Bruce, for example, says that the centurion did not mean that Jesus was God's Son in the biblical sense; rather he meant that Jesus was "divine" in the pagan sense.<sup>2</sup> Some would interpret the statement as a eulogy: "This man was God's Son."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the centurion had heard the accusations against Jesus, and concluded from the strange events surrounding the crucifixion that Jesus' claims must have been correct.

Some scholars believe that the centurion actually said only that Jesus was an innocent or "righteous" man (Luke 23:47), and that this was transformed by Mark (15:39) and Matthew (27:54) to fit their more focused "Son of God" Christologies. Luke 23:47 was explained by Augustine as follows: the centurion called Jesus the Son of God "simply because he believed Him to be a righteous man as many righteous men have been named sons of God."<sup>4</sup> Bratcher thinks that Luke misinterpreted his source and changed "the Son of God" to "a righteous man" because he interpreted the death of Jesus as a martyrdom.<sup>5</sup> Others suggest that

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<sup>1</sup>Vielhauer says that in the Gentile world the term "Son of God" would only have the sense of "divine man" (p. 208).

<sup>2</sup>F. F. Bruce, Jesus: Lord & Savior, pp. 112, 156.

<sup>3</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 179.

<sup>4</sup>Augustine De Consensu Evangelistarum 3. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Bratcher, "A Note on υἱὸς θεοῦ (Mark xv. 39)," p. 28. Those who say that Luke deliberately changed "Son of God" to "righteous man" in order to conform to the Jewish motif of the suffering righteous man in Wisdom of Solomon 2:13-20 and Psalm 22:8 ignore the fact that Matthew includes the "Son of God" confession while at the same time providing more support for the suffering righteous man interpretation than any of the other Gospels (Matt. 27:43). The best solution is to assume that the centurion designated Jesus as both God's Son and innocent of all charges against Him. It is noteworthy that in almost every instance where Jesus is called "righteous" in the New Testament, the description

Luke may have felt that "Son of God" from a Gentile would arouse false ideas about Jesus or that he substituted an ancient tradition about Jesus as the "righteous innocent sufferer."<sup>1</sup>

Mark says, however, that the centurion made his statement as a result of seeing how Jesus died (15:39). Matthew notes that when the centurion saw the earthquake and other signs (including perhaps the darkness at midday and the resurrection of various saints), he and others were greatly afraid (cf. Matt. 14:26; 17:6) and confessed Jesus as God's Son. In Mark the signs are omitted apparently in order to accentuate the person and death of Jesus. Such an emphasis on Christ's suffering and death does not fit the "divine man" concept of Hellenism.<sup>2</sup>

Pobee sees in the centurion's statement a cry of defeat for the Roman Empire.<sup>3</sup> The centurion, he says, recognized Jesus as a hero and a martyr, but Mark understood the title in its Christian sense as an affirmation of the divinity of Jesus. In 15:39 he uses the centurion's words as an "admission of the failure of all for which he as a representative of Roman government stood."<sup>4</sup> Pobee adds, "The cry of the centurion is a cry of defeat for the persecutor and a victory for the

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occurs in connection with His undeserved suffering and atonement for sin.

<sup>1</sup>Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Luke, p. 362; cf. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 181. According to Kingsbury, what influenced the centurion is that "Jesus dies as one who is utterly obedient to, and places his total trust in, God" (Christology of Mark's Gospel, p. 131).

<sup>3</sup>Pobee, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

gospel of the Son of God."<sup>1</sup>

It seems clear that whatever the centurion actually meant by his Son of God designation, in Mark's Gospel the confession becomes the climactic Christological statement of the book.<sup>2</sup> As Schweizer puts it, "There is no indication [in Mark] that Jesus was any other than the Son of God in the fullest sense from the very beginning. . . . Mark considered the Passion to be the decisive revelation of Jesus' divine Sonship."<sup>3</sup> Mark surely understood the statement in the same sense in which Jesus' sonship was revealed to the disciples at the Transfiguration (9:7).<sup>4</sup> The fact that the centurion uses the imperfect "was" ("this man was the Son of God") indicates that he is not speaking of Jesus' enthronement to sonship at His death,<sup>5</sup> or of apotheosis to deity, but rather of the fact that Jesus was God's Son throughout His earthly life, "sharing a unique relationship with God as his Father, obeying as a Son, and serving the Father as a Servant."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Heikki Räisänen, *Das "Messiasgeheimnis" im Markusevangelium*, p. 154; Steichele, pp. 267-73. The centurion's confession is the climax to Mark's presentation of the "revelation and recognition that Jesus is divine" (Chronis, "The Torn Veil," p. 106). His confession must therefore be seen as based on genuine perception (ibid., p. 109).

<sup>3</sup>Schweizer, *Mark*, p. 358; cf. Grundmann, p. 316; Jean-Noël Bezançon, *Le Christ de Dieu*, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Coppelt, 1:201.

<sup>5</sup>Schneider says that in Mark Jesus is "adopted" as God's Son at His baptism, "proclaimed" God's Son at His Transfiguration, and "acclaimed" Son of God by the centurion at the cross (Gerhard Schneider, "Die Davidssohnfrage (Mk 12,35-37)," *Bib* 53 [1972]:90); cf. Steichele, p. 291.

<sup>6</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 191.

Since the centurion's statement lacks the definite article with "Son," should the phrase be translated indefinitely as "a son of God"?<sup>1</sup> According to Bligh, Mark interpreted the centurion's words as stating that "This man, not Caesar, is the Son of God," so that the title should be taken as definite.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the predicate noun, "Son," precedes the verb, so that Colwell's Rule applies and the statement should be understood in a definite sense and translated "the Son of God."<sup>3</sup> If Mark had understood the centurion's utterance as indefinite, he could have placed the verb before the anarthrous predicate noun, as he does nineteen times elsewhere in his Gospel. Harner, however, claims that the word order in 15:39 "emphasizes the qualitative significance of the predicate rather than its definiteness or indefiniteness."<sup>4</sup> Mark wanted to say something concerning the meaning of Jesus' sonship, rather than simply to designate Him as God's Son. Nevertheless the strong emphasis on Jesus' deity remains.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>So Klostermann, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Philip H. Bligh, "A Note on Huios Theou in Mark 15:39," ET 80 (1968):53; H. A. Guy suggests that the best translation is "Surely this was God's son" ("Son of God in Mk 15, 39," p. 151). Chronis suggests that it is anarthrous because (1) Mark is using an expression fixed in popular usage, (2) it was already becoming a proper name, or (3) its word order shows it to be definite ("The Torn Veil," p. 105, n. 43).

<sup>3</sup>Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 379, n. 323; cf. E. C. Colwell, "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," JBL 3 (1933):12-21; Bratcher, "A Note on υἱός θεοῦ (Mark xv. 39)," pp. 27-28; Blum, "Studies in Problem Areas of the Greek Article," p. 23; Räisänen, p. 156. The centurion also did not mean simply that there was unity between Jesus and God.

<sup>4</sup>Philip B. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns," p. 80.

<sup>5</sup>Vielhauer, p. 209. Within the immediate context the stated identity of Jesus progresses from "king of the Jews" (15:26) to "the



But would a Roman centurion have been capable of making such a definite statement about the identity of Jesus as God's unique and fully divine Son? There are a number of ways in which the centurion might have learned about Jesus' claims to be uniquely the Son of God. He probably had heard the charge of the Jewish leaders that Jesus had made Himself the Son of God (John 19:7). He must have heard the words of the mockers at the cross (Matt. 27:40, 43). He may have received previous reports of Jesus' supernatural powers and sayings about divine sonship. And he certainly heard Jesus' prayers on the cross to God as His Father (Luke 23:34, 46).<sup>1</sup> These claims were then confirmed in his mind as true when he saw how Jesus died and the supernatural events surrounding Jesus' death (Mark 15:39). Stanton notes that the centurion's confession is a believing response, not amazement (Luke 23:47—"he glorified God").<sup>2</sup> As Moltmann puts it, "He did not see a divine hero and helper of humanity. He did not see merely an innocent sufferer on the cross. He heard Jesus' cry of God-abandonedness in rejection by God, and believed."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Use of the Title in Luke

##### By an angel

In announcing to Mary the coming conception and birth of Jesus, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Messiah, the king of Israel" (15:32) to "the Son of God" (15:39).

<sup>1</sup>E. Edmond Hiebert, Mark, p. 398.

<sup>2</sup>G. N. Stanton, Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, "The Crucified God," ThTo 31 (1974):15.

the angel Gabriel twice proclaims Christ's divine sonship.<sup>1</sup> Luke 1:31-35 contains two stages of revelation. First, in 1:31-33 the angel describes Jesus mostly in messianic terms. Second, in response to Mary's question, the virgin conception is explained as the source and sign of the holiness of Jesus, on which is based the title "Son of God" (1:35), which here surpasses every use of the concept of the Old Testament or in Judaism (cf. the same two stages in Luke 22:67, 70).<sup>2</sup> Even in 1:32, however, the title "Son of the Most High" is given before any direct indication of messiahship. As Marshall notes, "The mention of divine sonship before Davidic messiahship suggests that the latter is grounded in the former and should be interpreted in terms of it."<sup>3</sup>

Luke clearly intends 1:35 to elucidate 1:32, since the term "Most High" is mentioned in both verses.<sup>4</sup> The "Most High" is a frequent title for God in the Septuagint and in Jewish literature (even at Qumran). The term "son(s) of the Most High" is found in the Septuagint in Esther 16:16; Daniel 3:93; and in Psalm 82:6 and Sirach 4:10.

Here again, some scholars view the title as synonymous with "Messiah son of David."<sup>5</sup> Hahn, for example, concludes that Luke 1:32-35

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<sup>1</sup>The passage is above all Christological, in that it concerns the identity and dignity of Jesus—He is holy and He is God's own Son (Bezançon, p. 79).

<sup>2</sup>Augustin George, "Jésus Fils de Dieu dans L'Évangile selon Saint Luc," RB 72 (1965):190.

<sup>3</sup>Marshall, Luke, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; cf. Voss, pp. 78-81. Voss says that the poetic rhythm of the passage stresses the two designations "holy" and "Son of God" (p. 79).

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Vermes, p. 202; Martin Rese, Alttestamentliche Motive in der Christologie des Lukas, p. 188. Schweizer also says that Luke

is a messianic hymn, in which "Son of the Most High" depends on Jewish messianism, and that the title was originally applied to Jesus' eschatological function as the royal Messiah.<sup>1</sup> Voss sees in the title an emphasis on the "saving function" of Jesus rather than His essential nature.<sup>2</sup> Vermes says that the predictions in verses 32 and 35 that Jesus would be "called" Son of God show that it was only much later that "being Son of God" was substituted for "being called son of God."<sup>3</sup> According to Brown, the title "Son of God" (v. 35) parallels "Son of the Most High" (v. 32), and both echo 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7.<sup>4</sup>

To what degree does the title Son of God here relate to Jesus' miraculous conception? Fuller and Brown agree that Luke's birth narratives show no sign of a preexistent Son.<sup>5</sup> As Fuller puts it, the Son of God title "becomes operative only from the moment of conception."<sup>6</sup> The New Testament, he concludes, nowhere combines

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1:32-35 adopts the tradition of the Davidic Son of God; cf. Luke 1:69; 2:4; Acts 3:30-31; 13:23, 33-36 (Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 381).

<sup>1</sup>Hahn, pp. 284-85.

<sup>2</sup>Voss, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Vermes, p. 202. For an analysis of the composition history of the Lucan infancy narratives, cf. Patience, "Contribution to Christology," pp. 47-60.

<sup>4</sup>Raymond Brown, The Birth of the Messiah, p. 312; cf. Rese, pp. 203-4.

<sup>5</sup>Brown, pp. 141-42, 314, n. 48; Reginald H. Fuller, "The Conception/Birth of Jesus as a Christological Moment," JSNT 1 (1978):39; cf. idem, review of The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke, by Raymond E. Brown, in CBQ 40 (1978):120.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.; cf. Kingsbury, Jesus Christ, p. 104. Fuller says that "the Son of David Christology permeates all the infancy traditions, while the title Son of God has gained a foothold only here and there"

preexistence and virgin conception.<sup>1</sup> According to Fuller, in the announcement of Jesus' conception the angel declares His future role in salvation history rather than His ontological status. All the verbs are in the future tense: "He will be great," "He will be called holy, the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> Hahn, however, says that the future "shall be called" expresses the fact of Jesus' divine sonship from the day of His birth (not an appointment to office), resting on a creative act of election and separation already within Mary's womb (cf. Judg. 13:5; Isa. 49:1; Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15). The question of the "nature" of the child, he says, is not discussed.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, Schweizer states that in Luke 1:35 the conception of Jesus by the Spirit is the basis of His description as Son of God. Since Luke was not interested in the biological question, he does not seek a metaphysical understanding of the conception. According to Schweizer, Luke's point is simply that the birth of Jesus rests on God's act rather than the procreative power of man.<sup>4</sup> "As the one who has no human father Jesus is here called God's Son."<sup>5</sup> Schweizer believes that

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(p. 40).

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 45. The term "great" in this absolute sense, however, is elsewhere used only of God (Schweizer, Luke, p. 28).

<sup>3</sup>Hahn, p. 297. Since Rese sees adoption to divine sonship in Luke 3:22, he has a problem interpreting 1:35 as signifying sonship by birth. He attempts to solve this problem by taking all of Luke 1-2 and the verb "he shall be called" to refer specifically to a future fulfillment (Rese, pp. 193-94).

<sup>4</sup>Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 382.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

this indicates derivation from God. The title is thus explained in terms of the creative power of the Holy Spirit and the power of God.<sup>1</sup> Dalman and Burger also think that in 1:35 the angel explains the meaning of "the Son of God" by referring to the unique nature of Jesus' birth.<sup>2</sup>

This "conception Christology," however, is forced to isolate the birth narratives from the rest of Luke's Gospel and from the rest of the New Testament. This passage does not mean that Jesus was called officially what He was not naturally (as God's unique Son), but rather that "he really was what he is called."<sup>3</sup> Brown acknowledges that the statement "will be called" in 1:32 means "he will be."<sup>4</sup> As Liefeld puts it, "the virginal conception brings into human existence one who is the Son of God."<sup>5</sup> The phrase "Son of God" is used here "undoubtedly in its full sense of one begotten by God."<sup>6</sup> The designation "holy" signifies "divine" (cf. Ps. 89:5, 7; John 10:36).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Hartman thinks that for Luke Jesus is the Son of God largely because He has the Spirit of God (p. 108).

<sup>2</sup>Dalman, p. 288; Christoph Burger, Jesus als Davidsson, FRLANT, p. 134. Dalman remarks that in Luke 3:38 even the human lineage of Jesus is traced back to God (p. 288).

<sup>3</sup>Watson, p. 386. Luke shows that from His very birth Jesus had a unique relationship with God, since He did not have to wait for maturity of character or gain a position to be called the "Son of the Highest" (cf. Luke 6:35) (Ned B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Christ to Luke, p. 167).

<sup>4</sup>Brown, p. 291. He notes that the terms used in Rom. 1:4 are very similar to the terms used in the angelic message (Son of God, power, Holy Spirit) (p. 313).

<sup>5</sup>Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 vols., 8:833.

<sup>6</sup>Marshall, Luke, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Muñoz Iglesias thinks that "holy" and "Son of God" are

The connection between Jesus' human conception and His being called the Son of God should of course not be understood to mean that this is the only (or principal) reason that Jesus is or should be called the Son of God. As Machen explains, "All that is meant is that the activity of the Holy Spirit at the conception of Jesus is intimately connected that aspect of His being which causes Him to be called Son of God. One who was conceived in the womb by such a miracle must necessarily be the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> The angel does not imply, however, that the supernatural conception was the essential ground of Jesus' divine sonship. Luke elsewhere shows that Jesus' sonship involves much more than physical descendancy (cf. 10:22; 22:70).

#### By God the Father

At the baptism. In Luke the baptism of Jesus occurs in a context of prayer and worship (3:20). Just before heaven opens, Jesus offers worship to the Father.<sup>2</sup> And as Jesus prepares to begin His ministry, the words from heaven reveal "a relationship to God that evidently obtains prior to and independently of the Son's mission in the world" (cf. 20:13).<sup>3</sup>

At the Transfiguration. Peter's confession of faith in Jesus is

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"synonyms conceived as two messianic attributes," signifying nothing more than a special relationship with God (Salvador Muñoz Iglesias, "Lucas 1, 35b," Estudios Bíblicos 27 [1968]:293-99).

<sup>1</sup>J. Gresham Machen, The Virgin Birth of Christ, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup>"For Luke," Schlatter says, "the baptism of Jesus is the motivation for worship" (D. Adolf Schlatter, Das Evangelium des Lukas, p. 42); cf. Voss, pp. 83-94; Lentzen-Deis, pp. 284-86; Rese, pp. 191-95.

<sup>3</sup>Stonehouse, The Witness of Luke, p. 166.

simply, "[You are] the Christ [Messiah] of God" (Luke 9:20). But almost immediately God Himself adds to this the statement, "This is my Son, my Chosen One" (9:35), showing that being God's Son is essential to being the Messiah of God.<sup>1</sup>

By Satan and demons

Satanic temptation. The temptation narrative in Luke is equivalent to that in Matthew, except that Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations. Schweizer suggests that Luke places the temptation concerning the temple at the end because Jesus had claimed to at home there (Luke 2:49) and because 4:12 serves as a definitive rejection of Satan.<sup>2</sup> Together, the baptism and temptation of Jesus present God's and Satan's verdicts on Jesus side by side. With the descent of the Spirit and the pronouncement of sonship, God gives the positive statement. But Satan then appeals to Jesus' sonship as if he thinks Jesus may have a desire to establish power or authority for Himself.<sup>3</sup>

Demonic testimony. In Luke Jesus is the Son of God who has power and authority over the demons. They tremble before Him, and He casts them out (e.g., Luke 4:34, 41; cf. James 2:19). They beg Him not to torment them (Luke 8:28-29). Jesus as Son of God is their Master (Luke 8:28, 31).

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<sup>1</sup>Kingsbury, Jesus Christ, pp. 106-7. On the peculiarities of Luke's report of the heavenly voice, cf. Voss, pp. 164-66; Reese, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>Schweizer, Luke, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>Schlatter, Das Evangelium des Lukas, p. 44; cf. Voss, pp. 94-97.

In Luke 4:41 the titles Son of God and Christ are both used to describe the demons' knowledge of Christ. Dalman therefore concludes that Luke regarded the two titles as synonyms.<sup>1</sup> But if the messiahship of Jesus is grounded in His divine sonship, this may help explain Luke's relating the two titles.

The demons are the first in the Synoptics to recognize God's Son whose nature is genuinely divine and whose power comes from God's Spirit. Jesus' nature and power as Son flow together. "Sonship and Messiahship coincide when Jesus encounters the demon-possessed (Luke 4:41)."<sup>2</sup> The demons recognize Jesus because of His spiritual authority. They fall at His feet and confess Him as the Son of God because they have no other choice. In fact the demons recognize Jesus under the same category—Son of God—as He had already defeated their master, Satan.<sup>3</sup>

#### Conclusion

Normally in the Synoptic Gospels, beings with superhuman insight designate Jesus as the Son of God: Jesus Himself (Matt. 11:27; Mark 13:32), the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:32, 35), Satan (Matt. 4:3, 6), the demons (Mark 3:11; 5:7), the voice from heaven at His baptism (Mark 1:11) and Transfiguration (Mark 9:7), and Peter in his confession at Caesarea Philippi, where this was revealed to him by the Father in heaven (Matt. 16:16-17). Neither the high priest nor the mockers, of

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<sup>1</sup>Dalman, p. 275; cf. Guthrie, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 117; cf. Taylor, p. 121; Lövestam, p. 110; Dalman, p. 275; Grundmann, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Best, p. 16; cf. Bieneck, pp. 45-58.



course, accept Christ's application of the title.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' sonship therefore requires a supernatural revelation and announcement. The fact that "Son of God" and "Messiah" are not synonymous terms is shown by the fact that at His baptism Jesus is called "Son" but not "Christ."<sup>2</sup> The announcement concerning His sonship comes before His presentation of Himself as Messiah. "Jesus is God's anointed, the Messiah, only because he first is the Son who is cherished by the Father and pleasing to him."<sup>3</sup> As Marshall puts it, "Sonship is the supreme category of interpretation of the person of Jesus in the Gospels and messiahship occupies a subordinate place."<sup>4</sup> Jesus is God's Son not because of choice, but because of His genuinely divine nature.<sup>5</sup> The climax of the baptism is a declaration of who Jesus is: God's Son, who is anointed with God's Spirit to live out His sonship as God's suffering Servant. Most exegetes therefore concede that in the Synoptics Jesus is presented as the divine, supernatural Son of God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lövestam, p. 104, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Bieneck, p. 49. Even Lentzen-Deis agrees that the use of the title Son of God for Jesus was present in very early "tradition-layers" of primitive Christianity (p. 263).

<sup>3</sup>Edwards, "The Son of God," p. 107.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," p. 100.

<sup>5</sup>According to Thomas, "the Messianic meaning was the basis of an ethical and metaphysical idea that went far beyond anything purely official" (W. H. Griffith Thomas, Christianity Is Christ, p. 26). The title must refer, he says, to "an essential filial relation to God."

<sup>6</sup>Francis D. Pansini, "Our First Gospel" (Th.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1946), pp. 85-87.

PART IV

CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER IX

### EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

In the New Testament the title Son of God bears the primary weight of claims made concerning Christ's relationship with God. Dunn, who concludes that the early understanding of Jesus as the Son of God "apparently did not provide the starting point for a christology of pre-existence or incarnation," nevertheless states, "The emergence of 'Son of God' as the dominant title for Christ in the fourth century was well justified by its importance in earliest christology."<sup>1</sup>

#### Origin of the Title

The primary question of origins concerns whether Jesus Himself used the title (in a unique sense) or whether the title was developed in the later church from either Christian or non-Christian sources. It must be concluded that Jesus did use the title Himself, to refer especially to His unique and exclusive relationship to the Father. In his study on the names applied to Jesus, Taylor decides that the only names that Jesus "indubitably" used of Himself are "Son of God," "Son of

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<sup>1</sup>James D. G. Dunn, Christology in the Making, p. 64. Fuller argues, however, that "pre-existence and incarnation Christology provides the indispensable basis for the right understanding of the Christian understanding of God" (Reginald H. Fuller, "Pre-Existence Christology: Can We Dispense With It?", Word & World 2 [1982]:33).

Man," and "the Son."<sup>1</sup> Early Christian usage of the titles Son of God and Son thus derived from the usage of Jesus Himself.<sup>2</sup>

According to Taylor, "Within the limitations of the human life of Jesus His consciousness of Sonship was gained through the knowledge that God was His Father, mediated by prayer and communion with Him in a process of growth and development which begins before the opening of the historic ministry and is consummated in decisive experiences of revelation and intuition."<sup>3</sup> Jesus' consciousness of a unique filial relationship to God the Father is seen in His use of "Abba" in prayer, in His references to God as "My Father," and in speaking of Himself as "the Son" (Matt. 11:27; Mark 12:6; 13:32; Luke 10:22). As Marshall puts it, "In the use of the title by Jesus it was His awareness of a special relationship to God which was the determining factor rather than a messianic use of the title or the Hellenistic idea of the 'divine man.'"<sup>4</sup>

This consciousness of unique sonship was a determinative factor in Jesus' life. Sonship, therefore, is the fundamental category for Jesus' self-understanding and mission.<sup>5</sup> It also "controlled the titular

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent Taylor, The Names of Jesus, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>3</sup>Vincent Taylor, The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching, p. 186; William Manson, Jesus the Messiah, pp. 146-54, also argues that Jesus' messianic consciousness originated in His realization of God as Father—the filial quality of His relationship to God—as clarified by the messianic salutation of Psalm 2:7.

<sup>4</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Development of Christology in the Early Church," TynB 18 (1967):79; cf. idem, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," Interp 21 (1967):103.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in

choice of the early Church."<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the Synoptic presentation of Jesus' divine sonship, Bauckham states,

Apart from the pre-existence and full divinity of the Son in the Fourth Gospel, most aspects of Jesus' sonship according to John can be paralleled from the Synoptic tradition. The Johannine idea of sonship may be regarded as a fuller exposition of what may be gathered of the filial consciousness of Jesus from the Synoptics. . . . Sonship involves the unparalleled mutual intimacy of Father and Son (Mt. 11.27). The Son is the perfect reflection of the nature and character of the Father (cf. Mt. 5:45, 48).<sup>2</sup>

His opponents are Satan and his demons. "As God's Son, Jesus is he to whom victory and dominion belong, because God is creator of all things and final Lord over all, and nothing lies outside the sphere of his power."<sup>3</sup> The demons recognize Him as God's Son, submit, and tremble. At His trial, Jesus reveals Himself as the divine Judge, who at the right hand of the Father will have all power and authority (cf. Matt. 28:18). Since the Son is also the Servant (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18), however, the way to this position of exaltation is the way of the cross. In the Synoptics the designation of Jesus as Son of God is repeatedly connected with His suffering and death (cf. Matt. 3:17; 16:16-21; 17:5, 12; 26:63-66). As the only Son of the Father, He obediently walks to the cross, obtaining thereby redemption for mankind

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Christology," SJTh 31 (1978):253.

<sup>1</sup>John M. McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," Gr 62 (1981):305. Jesus is presented not simply as a son of God but as the only Son begotten of God (John Greehey and Matthew Vellanickal, "Le Caractère Unique et Singulier de Jésus comme Fils de Dieu," in Bible et Christologie, p. 178).

<sup>2</sup>Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus," p. 257.

<sup>3</sup>Evald Lövestam, Son and Saviour, p. 110.

and exaltation for Himself (cf. Phil. 2:6-11).<sup>1</sup>

Jesus "revealed a union between himself and God his Father so singular and transcendent that it had the effect of placing him on the same divine level as the Father."<sup>2</sup> The title Son expresses an essential relationship with God which allowed Him to function as a revealer of God.<sup>3</sup>

It was noted in chapter three that the Old Testament speaks of God's "son" as the one whom God has made the legitimate ruler of His people (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7). The Jews of Jesus' day feared, however, that by using the term "Son of God" they might promote a misunderstanding, namely, that the Son was physically generated by God. These fears were intensified by the prevalence of this concept among the pagans. Because of this the Jews used the term "God's Son" in quoting messianic prophecies, but avoided it as a messianic title.<sup>4</sup> At Jesus' baptism, however, God Himself applied the sonship of Psalm 2:7 and related passages to Jesus ("This is [or, "You are"] my beloved Son"). John the Baptist witnessed this event, and reported, "I have seen and

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<sup>1</sup>The Pontifical Biblical Commission rightly asks, "If Jesus is not the Son of God in a unique sense, why has God addressed to us in Him His 'last [greatest] word' [ultimum verbum] by means of the cross?" (Commission Biblique Pontificale, Bible et Christologie, pp. 60-61; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Biblical Commission and Christology," TS 46 [1985]:425).

<sup>2</sup>Pierre Benoit, "The Divinity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," in Son and Saviour, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>The fact that in the Synoptics Jesus does not refer to Himself explicitly as the divine Son of the Father may indicate a "lack of precision" intended by Jesus "as part of His gradual self-revelation" (William G. Most, The Consciousness of Christ, p. 79).

<sup>4</sup>E. P. Groenewald, "The Christological Meaning of John 20:31," Neot 2 (1968):137.

have testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). This was confirmed again at the Transfiguration. "Whatever therefore the Old Testament, late-Jewish or Hellenistic backgrounds of the designation 'Son of God' may be, it is God himself who calls Jesus this, and who applies the prophecy of Ps. 2:7 to Him."<sup>1</sup> The early church simply confessed that Jesus truly is what God Himself called Him—the Son of God. The content of the title must therefore be based on what Jesus disclosed concerning Himself and what the believers confessed concerning Him according to the Gospels.<sup>2</sup>

The personal relationship of Jesus to God as His Father is the basic stage in the development of Christology.<sup>3</sup> The basis of Jesus' ministry was His consciousness of God as His Father and the Father's acknowledgement of Him as Son. The Gospels show that Jesus' sonship was the underlying presupposition of His teaching and ministry. For Jesus, therefore, an awareness of His own character preceded His mission.<sup>4</sup>

As Jeremias has shown, the testimony of the sources is "quite unequivocal" that "Abba" as an address to God is an authentic and original utterance of Jesus and that this "Abba" "implies the claim of a unique revelation and a unique authority."<sup>5</sup> In addition such clearly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>3</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?—A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11," p. 335.

<sup>4</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament, p. 30.

authentic passages as Matthew 11:27 and Mark 13:32, and the use of the title by the high priest, testify to Jesus' own sense of and claim to divine sonship.

The secondary question of origins concerns whether the title can be traced to the Old Testament or to extrabiblical literature. Possible antecedents for the concept of individual divine sonship may lie in 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7; and Wisdom 2:13-18. But parallels with Hellenistic and Gnostic literature are extremely dubious. As Hengel says, "for Jews and Greeks the crucified Son of God was an unheard-of idea."<sup>1</sup>

#### Development of the Title

The thought of the early church developed from the self-witness of Jesus who knew Himself to be the Son of God. As Marshall puts it,

With the use of "Son of God" we thus encounter a title in which the relation of Jesus to God is especially prominent and in which the concept of deity is present. . . . That it was connected originally with Jesus' own estimate of himself is highly probable; what the early church did was to draw out the implications of his filial consciousness, as it was confirmed by the resurrection and illuminated by Old Testament prophecy and contemporary Jewish thought about the figure of wisdom. . . . the early church came to an increasing recognition of all that the title meant, so that in the end it was seen that it was not inappropriate to call Jesus "God."<sup>2</sup>

Though it is beyond the scope of the present study, it should be noted that "there is no evidence for a period in the early church in which Jesus was not regarded as being the Son of God, not merely in

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Hengel, The Son of God, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>I. Howard Marshall, The Origins of New Testament Christology, p. 123.



function but in person."<sup>1</sup> The evidence of Paul shows that a Christology with ontological implications developed at a very early date,<sup>2</sup> well before the time of the earliest written evidence, and that this was "fully consonant with Jesus' consciousness of being the Son of God during His earthly life." Marshall concludes, "The basic idea that Jesus stood in a special relation to God in His lifetime, a relation that stretched back to the period before His birth and that was confirmed by His exaltation and resurrection, was an essential ingredient of Jewish Christian christology."<sup>3</sup>

Though Dunn says that the New Testament "contains a diversity of christologies of Jesus' divine sonship,"<sup>4</sup> he nevertheless concedes that the belief of the early Christians in Christ's ascension and exaltation did not inevitably lead them to believe in His preexistence (or deity). In the ancient world the deification and translation of individuals did not entail their preexistence.<sup>5</sup> The church's belief in Christ's deity therefore likely has its origin in Jesus Himself. This means that Jesus may very well have taught His own deity by means of His Father-Son terminology.

That the title Son of God was not an alien import into either

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<sup>1</sup>I. Howard Marshall, "The Development of Christology in the Early Church," p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>On the development of Christology between Christ and Paul, cf. Martin Hengel, "Christologie und neutestamentliche Chronologie," in Neues Testament und Geschichte, pp. 43-67.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Dunn, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Thus John 3:13 was not an obvious implication to John's readers.

Judaism or Christianity is shown by the fact that among the Synoptics it is Matthew, writing particularly for Jews, who gives special prominence to the sonship of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, though the term Son of Man originally connoted the supernatural origin of the Messiah (cf. Dan. 7:13), for later (second century) Christian writers it came to denote simply Christ's human sonship in contrast to his divine sonship (see chapter two). The title Son of God, however, aided Christianity in defining the nature of Christ's preexistent deity, even replacing "Logos" as more suitable in depicting the relationships within the Godhead.<sup>2</sup>

#### Definition of the Title

The witness of Jesus as the unique Son of the Father must serve as the foundation for a definition of the title. In addition the significance of the Semitic idiom "son" as indicating one who shares the nature and character of his father must always be kept in mind.

Robinson believes that the terms "the Father" and "the Son" were originally parabolic language, drawn from ordinary human relationships.<sup>3</sup> In his view this makes Jesus purely human and only "functionally" divine. He says, "The Father and Son are one, but not because the Son is more than a man. The Son speaks true of God, he is the Word of God, the embodiment of God—in fact he is God for us—without ever ceasing to

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<sup>1</sup>Longenecker, p. 98. In fact the "Hellenization" of Christianity led to Docetism, not to Pauline or Johannine Christology.

<sup>2</sup>Dunn, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>John A. T. Robinson, The Human Face of God, p. 186.

be completely and totally a man."<sup>1</sup>

The differences between the ontological and the functional concepts of Christ's divinity, according to Robinson, can be seen in an analogy with royalty. A king who becomes a commoner, like the Japanese emperor, is always a royal personage and different from all other commoners. On the other hand, a commoner who is elevated to royal office, like the Swedish king, embodies royalty and has a royal office, but remains forever a commoner. The first illustrates the ontological view—Jesus is the divine Son who became incarnate as a man. The second depicts the functional view—Jesus is a man who embodies divinity (the kingly rule of God), rather than a divine being who takes on humanity.<sup>2</sup>

As Bauckham says, however, "A purely functional Christology of God's action in Jesus' mission is inadequate, for his mission is rooted in his being the Son in his personal intimacy with the Father."<sup>3</sup> McDonald notes that "in those passages where Jesus speaks of Himself as 'the Son' and calls God 'His Father,' the official messianic idea is entirely absent. He is not, that is to say, called Son of God because He is Messiah; He is Messiah because He is Son of God."<sup>4</sup> A relationship of absolute intimacy with God is presupposed.

Bauckham believes that one could never demonstrate historically that Jesus' religious consciousness was unique, but rather only that His

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 184-85.

<sup>3</sup>Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology," p. 259.

<sup>4</sup>Hugh D. McDonald, Jesus—Human and Divine, p. 92.

consciousness was distinctive and that He claimed a unique relation to God.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless in light of the Synoptic evidence Bauckham concludes that "the historical Jesus did experience his filial relationship to God as a unique relationship."<sup>2</sup> "For the mind of Jesus the unclouded consciousness of an eternally unshared Sonship is the supreme reality. The ethical union implies a metaphysical one—a union of nature."<sup>3</sup> Between Jesus and God, all things are common. "It is the filial consciousness not the messianic consciousness which is the basic fact of our Christian faith and gospel."<sup>4</sup>

In virtually every reference in the Synoptic Gospels to Jesus' sonship, either His supernatural origin, His unique relationship to the Father, or His claim to equality with God is highlighted. "Ultimately, only Jesus' equality with God could justify the absolute claim made upon men's faith by his life" (cf. Luke 12:8-9)<sup>5</sup> and the saving uniqueness of His death and resurrection. Indeed, as Sturch claims, the very concept of Jesus' unique sonship "leads to a series of theological problems which may be resolvable only by an assertion of divinity."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bauckham, "The Sonship of the Historical Jesus in Christology," p. 245.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>3</sup>McDonald, p. 92.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 93. Sheraton says that Jesus' "vocation was founded upon His personality. It was His divine-human Person that gave Him the right to be the Messiah" (J. P. Sheraton, "Our Lord's Teaching Concerning Himself," PTR 1 [1903]:532).

<sup>5</sup>John M. McDermott, "Jesus and the Son of God Title," Gr 62 (1981):316.

<sup>6</sup>Richard L. Sturch, "Can One Say 'Jesus Is God'?" in Christ the Lord, p. 338. According to Wells, the significance of the title is that

In the Synoptic Gospels, then, the title Son of God may be defined as expressing that unique attribute of Jesus Christ by which He exclusively and ontologically shares the divine nature and character of His heavenly Father, revealing God to man as no other can do and carrying out perfectly God's purposes as Messiah, Servant, and eternal Sovereign. In the rest of the New Testament the title becomes slightly more generalized as an expression of the content of the gospel: Jesus Christ as the divine, preexistent, resurrected, exalted Messiah, who brought salvation through His death as God-Man on the cross.<sup>1</sup>

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"Christ comes from the depths of God himself; he is God. But he is God in human form, a form which hides his Godness and which requires of him obedience to the Father whose being he shares" (David F. Wells, The Person of Christ, p. 70).

<sup>1</sup>Cf. M. E. Boismard, "The Divinity of Christ in Saint Paul," in Son and Saviour, pp. 95-121; W. Robert Cook, The Theology of John; Marinus DeJonge, Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God, pp. 50-52, 58-60, 141-143; William R. G. Loader, Sohn und Hoherpriester, WMANT 53 (1981); Donatien Mollat, "The Divinity of Christ in Saint John," in Son and Saviour, pp. 125-59; J. Schmitt, "Christ Jesus in the Apostolic Church," in Son and Saviour, pp. 35-55; Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St. John, 2 vols., 2:172-86; Graham Stanton, "Incarnational Christology in the New Testament," in Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued, pp. 151-65; Frances Young, "The Finality of Christ," in Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued, pp. 174-86; John V. Dahms, "The Johannine Use of *Monogenēs* Reconsidered," NIS 29 (1983):222-32; James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus—Flesh and Spirit: An Exposition of Romans I. 3-4," JThS 24 (1973):40-68; I. J. Du Plessis, "Christ as the 'Only Begotten,'" Neot 2 (1968):22-31; Paul Ellingworth, "'Like the Son of God': Form and Content in Hebrews 7, 1-10," Bib 64 (1983):255-62; H. L. N. Joubert, "'The Holy One of God' (John 6:69)," Neot 2 (1968):57-69; W. R. G. Loader, "The Central Structure of Johannine Christology," NIS 30 (1984):188-216; W. F. Lofthouse, "Fatherhood and Sonship in the Fourth Gospel," ET 43 (1932):442-48; Dale Moody, "God's Only Son: The Translation of John 3:16 in the Revised Standard Version," JBL 72 (1953):213-19; John A. T. Robinson, "The Most Primitive Christology of All?" JTS 7 (1956):177-89; T. C. Smith, "The Christology of the Fourth Gospel," RExp 71 (1974):19-30.

### Theological Implications

Most of the occurrences of the title, both in the Synoptics and in the rest of the New Testament, are designed for believers as doctrine rather than for evangelism or worship. The early Christians believed in and confessed Jesus as the "Son of God," but they usually worshiped Him as "Lord."<sup>1</sup>

However, the doctrine of Jesus as the Son of God underlies all Christian worship and devotion. Man can know God only through revelation by the Son (Matt. 11:27). And it is through Christ's sonship that His disciples receive their own intimate sonship with God (cf. Gal. 4:4-7).

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:14-17).

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<sup>1</sup>That Jesus' lordship was also part of early Christian confession is indicated by Rom. 10:9-10 and 1 Cor. 12:3.

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