



The "Son of Man" in the Book of Daniel

Author(s): Nathaniel Schmidt

Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1900), pp. 22-28

Published by: The Society of Biblical Literature

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3259068>

Accessed: 12/03/2010 14:28

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=sbl>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Society of Biblical Literature is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

The "Son of Man" in the Book of Daniel.

PROF. NATHANIEL SCHMIDT, M.A.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY.

THE Messianic interpretation of Dan. 7¹³ apparently meets us in extant writings as early as in the first century of our era. It is evident that the being who looks like a man and is referred to as a man in Enoch 46^{2, 3, 4} 48² 62^{7, 9, 14} 63¹¹ 69^{26, 27, 29a, b} 70¹ and in 4 Ezra 13^{3 ff.} is the Messiah. While some features of the description seem to indicate other sources in literature or tradition, it still remains most likely that these writers had in mind the passage in Daniel and understood it as a prophecy of the Messiah.

The same is true of that Apocalypse of Jesus¹ of which parts have been preserved, chiefly in Mt. 24¹⁻⁵¹ Mk. 13¹⁻³⁷ Lk. 21⁶⁻³⁶ and also of Rev. 1^{13, 2}. Through a translation of the Synoptic Apocalypse used by some collector of logia the term $\delta \nu\acute{\iota}\delta\varsigma \tau\omicron\upsilon \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\nu$ found its way as a Messianic title into the gospels, and was made the rendering of **בר נשא** even in sayings where $\delta \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$ would have prevented a serious misconception.³ It is clear that the evangelists understood

¹ The reference to the murder of Zechariah b. Barachiah (Mt. 23³⁵ Lk. 11⁵¹; cf. Josephus, *Bellum jud.* 4^{335, 343}) proves that this apocalypse cannot have been written long before the end of the first century, as Wellhausen has convincingly shown, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*³, 1897, p. 366; *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, VI. 1899, p. 20 ff.

² Rev. 14¹⁴ does not refer to the Christ. It is a description of an angel, as the next verse clearly indicates by the words $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$.

³ Cf. my article "Was **בר נשא** a Messianic Title?" read before this Society in 1895, published in this JOURNAL, XV. p. 36 ff. The same conclusions were independently reached by Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn*, 1896, and have been further defended by Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, VI. 1899, p. 187 ff., and Pfeleiderer, *The New World*, 1899, p. 444 ff. The theory was presented in a somewhat different form by Arnold Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache*, 1896. The way was paved by Eerdmans, *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 1894, pp. 153 ff. Rhees, in this JOURNAL, XVII. p. 96, writes: "Schmidt discusses the Aramaic original of this title with elaborate detail, but his argument is manifestly hampered by the prejudgment that Jesus cannot have made for himself at the outset any supernatural claims. This is begging the whole question." An argument based throughout on linguistic and literary considerations might profitably be considered, even if it should be presented with elaborate detail and come from a mind suffering from theological prejudices. In this case the mental processes of the author have not been

כבר אנוש in Dan. 7¹³ as referring to the Messiah.⁴ The natural impression of the Greek gospels is that Jesus himself shared this view and used the phrase to designate himself as the Messiah.⁵ As long as the Greek text was regarded as the court of last appeals no other view was possible in the church.⁶

It is not strange that Akiba⁷ should have adopted the Messianic interpretation. Through Joshua b. Levi⁸ and Shemuel b. Nahman⁹ it gained the ascendancy in the synagogue.

Even in modern times it has found able defenders in Lengerke,¹⁰ Ewald,¹¹ Knobel,¹² Hilgenfeld,¹³ Bleek,¹⁴ Sam. Davidson,¹⁵ Riehm,¹⁶ Orelli,¹⁷ Dillmann,¹⁸ Behrmann,¹⁹ Kamphausen,²⁰ and Boehmer.²¹

divined with sufficient clearness by his critic. Before examining this subject in detail, I shared the then common view that "the Son of Man," or "the man," was a Messianic title, and that the teaching, conduct, and tragic fate of Jesus could best be accounted for on the assumption that he regarded himself as the Messiah and made for himself such supernatural claims as this position implied, though at the same time emphasizing the ideal humanity he sought to realize. This assumption to some extent hampered me, and a piece of the old leaven remained in my paper. The result of my investigations has indeed convinced me that Jesus never made for himself any Messianic claims, either at the baptism or at Caesarea Philippi. But this result was wholly unexpected. On a *priori* grounds, I still fail to see why it should not have been as possible for Jesus to make such claims as for a Theudas, a Simon Magus, a Simon bar Koziba. It would have been an easier road to travel than the narrow path he trod. That he rose above even the desire to become a righteous king, a world-conquering Messiah, can be explained only by his peculiar moral disposition and his supreme religious genius.

⁴ Cf. Mt. 26⁶⁴ Mk. 14⁶². Brandt, *Evangelische Geschichte*, 1893, p. 53 ff., and Wellhausen, *Skizzen*, VI. p. 207, have convinced me that we have not here a genuine word of Jesus. My former view, *l.c.* p. 51, suggested by Brückner, *Jahrbücher f. prot. Theologie*, 1886, p. 264 ff., and Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels*, 1890, p. 255 ff., is no longer tenable.

⁵ This has been well shown by Oort, *De uitdrukking o υιος του ανθρωπου in het Nieuwe Testament*, 1893.

⁶ The first suggestion that *filius hominis* = *homo* in Mt. 12⁸² and 12⁸ came from Génébrard and Grotius, two eminent linguists who went behind the Greek expression to the Aramaic. Cf. Arnold Meyer, *l.c.* p. 141 ff. ⁷ *Sanh.* 38 b.

⁸ *Sanh.* 98 a. ⁹ *Midrash Tehillin*, 217. ¹⁰ *Commentar*, 1835.

¹¹ *Propheten*², III. p. 444. ¹² *Der Prophetismus der Hebräer*, 1837, ii. 408.

¹³ *Die jüdische Apokalyptik*, 1857.

¹⁴ *J.d.Th.* 1860, p. 58.

¹⁵ *Introduction*, 1863, III. p.177.

¹⁶ *Die messianische Weissagung*, 1885, p. 519 ff.

¹⁷ *Die alttestamentliche Weissagung*, 1882, p. 519 ff.

¹⁸ *Handbuch d. Alt. Theologie*, 1895, p. 538.

¹⁹ *Das Buch Daniel*, 1894.

²⁰ In *Bunsen's Bibelwerk*, 1868, III. 662, and in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 1899.

²¹ *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn im Buche Daniel*, 1899, p. 139 ff.

Many of the arguments adduced in favor of this view are of little weight. Dillmann²² found it "incomprehensible that the people of the saints against whom the little horn has already before been fighting on the earth should be represented as coming with the clouds of heaven"; but no one has maintained that the Jewish people itself had had its abode in celestial realms or had been translated, nor is it distinctly stated in the text whence the man-like being comes. Orelli²³ — as Auberlen before him — is troubled by the inconcinnity brought into the narrative by vv.²¹ and ²², but he fails to perceive that this inconcinnity remains whatever view is taken of the "son of man." I regard vv.²¹ and ²² as an interpolation making a bad break between question and answer. Boehmer²⁴ thinks that only an individual, not a nation, can receive service; at least a nation cannot be served by individuals. The people may, indeed, according to him, be served and obeyed by impersonal, abstract "dominions," but not by living, real, concrete "nations, peoples, and tongues." The author of Isa. 45¹⁴ seems to have thought differently. This is an entirely imaginary distinction. More valuable is Boehmer's observation that the lion of v.⁴ stands upright as a *man* and has *human* intelligence and that the eleventh horn of the beast, v.⁸, has the eyes of a *man* and a *speaking* mouth. These descriptions, he maintains, do not reveal any intention on the author's part to emphasize a contrast between the human and the bestial. But the argument is not decisive, since the author may have intended to suggest that the world-powers, in spite of their essentially brutal character, had shown some human characteristics, yet failed to attain to true humanity. Such subtlety of reasoning, however, is exceedingly improbable, and the cause of the hybrid forms in one case, the purely human in the other, is to be found elsewhere. The reading in v.¹⁷ is too uncertain to support the weight of an argument. G and Θ both have βασιλῆαι, and מלכין should probably be emended to מלכון or מלכות.

The real strength of the Messianic interpretation lies in the fact that it does not lose itself in vague symbolism and modern humanitarian ideas, but recognizes the presence here of a well-known concrete personality. But it utterly fails to explain how the Messiah once introduced can have dropped so completely out of the author's thought, not only in the explanation of the vision where he is unceremoniously ignored, but also in the future deliverance, with which Michael has much to do, the Messiah nothing.

²² *l.c.*²³ *l.c.*²⁴ *l.c.* p. 143.

A non-messianic interpretation possibly appears already in En. 71. The author of this chapter unquestionably represents Enoch as the "son of man" mentioned in En. 46³. He distinctly affirms that God said to Enoch, "Thou art the man who art born unto righteousness," 'anta we'etu walda be'ezî v.¹⁴, alluding to the opening scene in 46. The obvious dependence of the latter chapter on Dan. 7¹³ renders it probable that the author understood Daniel's "son of man" as also referring to the translated Enoch.

Dalman²⁵ calls attention to *Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, Vaj. 36⁶, where the scene in Daniel is alluded to, but no Messiah is mentioned, while the dignitaries of Israel are presented as sitting on thrones and ruling the nations.

Ibn Ezra sees in **אנש כבר אנש** Israel. He declares: **יאמר רבי ישועה כי זה כבר אנש הוא המשיח ונכון דבר רק הוא עם הקדש שהם ישראל**.

This view has been maintained in modern times by Hofmann,²⁶ Hitzig,²⁷ Wittichen,²⁸ Colani,²⁹ Kuenen,³⁰ Stanton,³¹ Keim,³² Vernes,³³ Smend,³⁴ Toy,³⁵ Marti,³⁶ Meinhold,³⁷ Bevan,³⁸ Réville,³⁹ Dalman,⁴⁰ Schürer,⁴¹ Gunkel,⁴² Wellhausen,⁴³ Lietzmann,⁴⁴ Charles,⁴⁵ Prince,⁴⁶ Curtis,⁴⁷ Hühn,⁴⁸ *al.* Four years ago I shared this view.⁴⁹ It recognizes the fact that the man on the cloud is a representative of Israel, while it explains his disappearance from the scene.

Yet it is not altogether satisfactory. It is impossible to escape the impression that this symbolic representation of "a more humane régime," "*ein Menschheitsideal*," savors more of modern sentiments than of the conceptions of Semitic antiquity. Of Greek speculation

²⁵ *Die Worte Jesu*, 1898, p. 201 f.

²⁷ *Das Buch Daniel*, 1850.

²⁶ *Weissagung und Erfüllung*, I. p. 209 f.

²⁸ *Die Idee des Menschen*, 1872.

²⁹ *Jésus Christ et les croyances messianiques*, 1864, p. 16.

³⁰ *De Godsdiens van Israel*, 1870, II. p. 330.

³¹ *The Jewish and Christian Messiah*, 1886, p. 109.

³² *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, 1867, p. 241.

³³ *Histoire des idées messianiques*, 1874, p. 36 f.

³⁴ *Lehrbuch d. alt. Religionsgeschichte*, 1893, p. 474.

³⁵ *Judaism and Christianity*, 1891, p. 320, "the pious kernel of the nation."

³⁶ *Geschichte der israelitischen Religion*, 1897, p. 290.

³⁷ *Kommentar*, 1889.

³⁹ *Jesus de Nazareth*, 1897, I. p. 184

³⁸ *Commentary*, 1892.

⁴⁰ *l.c.* p. 197.

⁴¹ *Gesch. des jüd. Volkes*², 1886, II. 426; *id.*³, 1898, II. 506.

⁴² *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 1895, p. 331.

⁴⁵ *The Book of Enoch*, 1893, p. 315

⁴³ *Skizzen*, VI. p. 192 f.

⁴⁶ *A Critical Commentary*, 1899.

⁴⁴ *l.c.* p. 41.

⁴⁷ *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1898.

⁴⁸ *Die messianischen Weissagungen*, 1899, p. 78.

⁴⁹ *l.c.*

there is nothing in the book. The foreign influences point in an entirely different direction. Gunkel⁵⁰ feels the difficulty of assuming that this emblem of humanitarianism was the creation of the author's own imagination, and is not satisfied with the vagueness resulting from the necessary abandonment of the Messianic interpretation. But his eyes are so steadfastly turned to the East, looking for some mysterious "son of man" to appear in the clouds of Babylonian mythology, that he, too, fails to raise the question as to the class of beings in Jewish folklore to which this figure belongs.

Knobel⁵¹ noticed long ago that "one like a son of man" is a formula used elsewhere in the description of angels, and commented on the influence of Persian doctrines of spirits upon the conception of the Messiah. Dillmann⁵² observed that the head of the kingdom, *i.e.* the Messiah, is "*gleich einem Engelwesen, denn diese werden sonst in Daniel auch als כּבּר אַנּשׁ bezeichnet.*" The opposite is true. The Messiah is not compared with an angel, but the being described is compared with a man.

I venture to offer a new interpretation. The "one like unto a son of man," in Dan. 7¹³, is an angel, and more particularly Michael, the guardian angel of Israel. So uniformly is a phrase of this kind used to designate an angel in the book of Daniel that, unless there is strong reason for seeking a different explanation, this should be accepted. In 8¹⁵ the angel Gabriel is introduced as "one having the appearance of a man," כּמראּה גּבּר; according to v.¹⁶, he has the voice of a man, קוּל אַדָּם. In 10¹⁶ Gabriel is described as "one like the appearance of the sons of men," כּדמוּת בּני אַדָּם, and in v.¹⁸ כּמראּה אַדָּם. Often the angels are simply described as men. Thus of the four גּבּרין in 3²⁵, one is like "a son of the gods," בּר אֱלֹהִין. In 9²¹ the angel is referred to as "the man Gabriel," הָאִישׁ גּבּרִיאֵל; in 10⁵ he is a man clothed in linen, and so again in 12^{6, 7}. In Rev. 14¹⁴, ὁμοιον ὄντων ἀνθρώπων points to a כּבּר אַנּשׁ and is, as the next verse shows, a designation of an angel. In earlier times the angel was always represented in human shape. That in Ez. 1²⁶ God himself is described as כּמראּה אַדָּם, does not militate against this conception, for the angels are only degraded gods from the מלאך יהוה to the "prince of Javan." There is no difference between Gabriel and Michael in this respect. From En. 87² we know that the four archangels were all "like white men," *kama 'amzāla zab'e ša'addā*.

The only one of these man-like beings who is so closely identified with Israel as to represent it in the celestial בֵּית דִּין is Michael.

⁵⁰ *l.c.*⁵¹ *l.c.* I. 334.⁵² *l.c.*

Gabriel is, as his name indicates, the **אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים**, the prophet, the *angelus interpres*, the Jewish Nabu. When he comes to reveal the future to Daniel he is intercepted by the angel of Persia and detained twenty-one days until Michael arrives, 10¹⁸. He is also obliged to struggle with the angel of Greece until Michael helps him, 10²¹. But it is Michael who everywhere represents the new world-power, Israel. When the kingdom is finally delivered to the people of the Most High, it is he who rises triumphantly, 12¹. He is distinctly declared to be the celestial prince of Israel, **שָׂרְכָם**, 10²¹; **הַשָּׂר הַגָּדוֹל הַעֹמֵד עַל בְּנֵי עַמְךָ**, 12¹.

As Israel's representative before the celestial court Michael is given the world-kingdom. The thrones set for the court, the myriads of angels, the stream of fire, the clouds of heaven, show that the scene is laid, not on earth, but in heaven. The question has been much discussed whence this man-like being comes. It has not been observed that before the angel appears with the clouds (or on the clouds; *ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν* G points to **עַל** rather than **עִם**), the beast has already been slain, its body destroyed and consumed by fire. Has the representative of Israel had anything to do with this destruction of the beast? In 4 Ezra 13¹ the one *quasi similitudinem hominis* arises from the heart of the sea, *ex corde maris*. In the Apocalypse of Elijah,⁵⁸ the seer relates: "I beheld the sea that I had seen below in Amente; its waves rose unto the clouds." It is quite possible that already in Daniel the triumphant celestial champion of Israel was conceived of as coming from the sea with the clouds, having accomplished the overthrow of the beast. This beast may often shift its forms, and be made to represent this or that power hostile to the Most High. In the Apocalypse of John it is the dragon that Michael fights; in Assumptio Mosis it is Satan. Originally it was Tiāmāt, and Michael's prototype is Marduk. That the destruction of the beast is here ascribed to Michael, while in earlier writings the violation of Rahab-Ribbu, the piercing of the Dragon, the conquest of Tehom-Tiāmāt, are Yahweh's work, is only in harmony with the well-authenticated development of Jewish thought.

This interpretation seems to satisfy all requirements. The heavenly being that has the appearance of a man is understood in the same sense as in all other passages in Daniel. It is not necessary to create a special meaning for it here. The figure is not a product of the author's imagination, not a vague symbol of a distinctly modern sentiment, but a well-known personality, the guardian angel of Israel.

⁵⁸ 14²⁰ 15¹, ed. Steindorff.

Since it is in the celestial world, and not on the throne of David, that Michael represents the Jewish people, it is to be expected that, when the vision is explained in v.²⁸, he should disappear and the people of the saints of the Most High take his place. This celestial figure having once been introduced does not, however, disappear in the further development of the drama, but, as might be expected, occupies to the end the most conspicuous position. The destruction of the beast and the coming with the clouds of heaven find a ready explanation in the mythical lore of the period, a knowledge of whose origin and growth is as useful to the modern exegete in ascertaining the author's thought as it probably would have been useless to the author himself. It is only natural that, with the growth of the Messianic idea, the work of Michael and the honor ascribed to him as the representative of Israel should shift to the shoulders of the Messiah.