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## JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE SON OF MAN, THE PARABLES OF ENOCH AND MOUNT ARBEL

**Abstract:** This study summarizes the author’s recent research on the remains of a cave village dating from 100 BCE at Mt. Arbel near Magdala, Lower Galilee, and outlines the archaeological, historical and literary evidence identifying it as the home of an Essene monastic community and the author of the Parables of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71). With the consensus on dating the Parables to the start of the first century CE, these findings allow us to advance the discussion of the Parables’ influence on Jesus of Nazareth and his self-designation as the Son of Man, as reported in the Gospels. The discussion concludes by focusing on the final chapter of the Parables of Enoch, chapter 71, examining its role as counter-evidence to the Christian claim that Jesus Christ is the divine ‘Son of Man’. When viewed in this context, the ‘anti-witness’ of chapter 71 supplements other evidence pointing to direct contact between Jesus of Nazareth and the Essene community at Mt. Arbel, around 10-15 CE, and begets the proposal that it was here that he received his divine calling as the Messiah Son of Man—the central figure in the messianic prophecy of the Parables of Enoch.

### 1. Introduction

In 2005, there was a meeting of the Enoch Seminar at the Camaldoli Monastery in Italy, in which a consensus was reached, among leading scholars, that the ‘Parables of Enoch’<sup>1</sup> was composed during the reign of Herod the Great and completed at the start of the first century CE, a mere decade or two before the public mission of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>2</sup> David deSilva duly notes “the growing tendency to date the Parables to the turn of the era or slightly before facilitates the posing of the question of influence”.<sup>3</sup> Although the question of influence was raised by a few scholars at the Camaldoli conference, no conclusions could be drawn for lack of progress on the social setting and provenance of the Parables of Enoch. Nevertheless, at the end of the conference, Paolo Sacchi was inspired to conclude “I think the Enoch Seminar could contribute to the start of what we might call the ‘fourth quest for the historical Jesus,’ which should begin with a careful study of Jesus’ milieu”.<sup>4</sup> James Charlesworth was even more daring in his conclusion:

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<sup>1</sup> *1 Enoch* 37–71, the book at the centre of *1 Enoch*, also called the Similitudes of Enoch or Book of Parables, whose formal title (the first words of the text) is ‘The Vision of Wisdom that Enoch Saw’.

<sup>2</sup> The date is no longer tentative, writes Paolo Sacchi in his summary of the meeting, “The burden of proof has shifted to those who disagree with the Herodian date. It is now their responsibility to provide evidence that would reopen the discussion”, ‘The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the Parables of Enoch: Summary and Prospects for Future Research’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini, Grand Rapids MI/ Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007; 511.

<sup>3</sup> David A. deSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James and Jude: What Earliest Christianity Learned from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012; 134.

<sup>4</sup> Sacchi, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 512. However, the contribution of the Enoch Seminar is not qualitatively different from the third quest, and more recently the title of fourth quest was given by Paul N. Anderson to the study of the Historical Jesus from a Johannine Perspective.

“The Book of Parables (*IEn* 37–71), appears to be a Jewish work that antedates Jesus, and the author seems to imagine a connection among the Messiah, the Righteous One, and the Son of Man. The work most likely took shape in Galilee, not far from where Jesus centered his ministry. He, thus, could have been influenced by this writing or the traditions preserved in the Parables of Enoch. In this case, his own self-understanding may have been shaped by the relationship between the Son of Man and the Messiah that is found only in the Parables of Enoch. If those in the Enoch group were known as the great scholars who had special and secret knowledge, and if they lived in Galilee, then Jesus would most likely have had an opportunity to learn firsthand about their teachings through discussions and debates”.<sup>5</sup>

In 2013, James Charlesworth and Mordechai Aviam went on to propose ancient Magdala, on the northwestern shores of the Sea of Galilee, as the home of the author of the Book of Parables, in the light of recent archaeological findings there.<sup>6</sup> However, their arguments were not specific for Magdala, and their proposal has not been widely accepted. In his recent volume *Son of Man*, Richard Bauckham writes

“We have to conclude, quite simply, that we do not know where the Parables of Enoch were written and, in the nature of the case, we are unlikely ever to know. Literature of this kind does not often disclose the place of origin. It is noteworthy that few scholars feel the need to identify a precise place of origin. In Charlesworth’s work this need obviously arises from the desire to make a connection with Jesus. From the archaeological point of view, it would be gratifying, on the basis of the archaeology, to be able to relate specific literary works to specific sites and discoveries, but (except when discoveries include texts) this is very rarely possible”.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The Arbel Cave Village

Bauckham’s conclusion is unduly pessimistic, given that the mountain overlooking Magdala, Mount Arbel, has been identified, since ancient times, as the place where divine redemption would begin.<sup>8</sup> Since Arbel is located on the ancient tribal border between Zebulun and Naphtali, it is highly likely that its association with redemption, in both the Christian and Jewish traditions, goes back to the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-7, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, this association is vividly expressed in the seventh-century, Jewish eschatological apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel*, which is a messianic prophecy centred on Arbel and most likely composed in the same area. Unless we dismiss as pure chance the convergence of Mount Arbel with the start of messianic redemption and the provenance of a seventh century Jewish eschatological apocalypse, this may indeed be the right place to look for the origins of the Parables of Enoch, which is itself a messianic prophecy expressed as an eschatological apocalypse.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ‘Can We Discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 467.

<sup>6</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ‘Did Jesus Know the traditions in the *Parables of Enoch*’, *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and James H. Charlesworth, London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013; 184-191, and Mordechai Aviam, ‘The Book of Enoch and the Galilean Archaeology and Landscape’, *A Paradigm Shift*, 159-69.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Bauckham, “*Son of Man*”: *Volume One, Early Jewish literature*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2023; 131.

<sup>8</sup> “For centuries it was believed that the redemption of the Jewish people would begin near the townlet of Arbel, perched on a cliff in lower Eastern Galilee”, Zvi Ilan, ‘Reviving a 2,000-Year-Old Landmark’, *Eretz Magazine*, Winter 1988/89, 61.

<sup>9</sup> John Ben-Daniel, ‘Redemption Begins at Mount Arbel’, *Qumran Chronicle*, Vol. 32, Nos. 1-4, Dec 2024, 71-102. The following description of Arbel and its relation to the Parables of Enoch is adapted from that article, as a preparation for taking up the issue aired on pages 92-93, concerning a direct connection with Jesus of Nazareth.

<sup>10</sup> Uzi Leibner states it like this: “These data indicating the continued existence of a large Jewish settlement here, apparently into the Early Islamic period, can explain the frequent references to Arbel in the *piyyutim* and in eschatological literature from the Early Islamic period. Moreover, it appears more than a coincidence that the War of the End of Days and the beginning of the redemption are attributed in these genres to the area of Arbel, which was a focus of zealot military activity in the distant past and whose dominant Jewish settlement remained in existence

Mount Arbel and its impressive range of cliffs are now enclosed in the Arbel National Park, two kilometres southwest of Magdala. Apart from scattered clusters of man-made caves along the exposed cliff, the National Park embraces the ruins of two ancient population centres: 1) an ancient town and synagogue on the Plain of Arbel, just as it starts to slope down into the valley of Arbel stream and 2) the ruins of a dense collection of more than 100 man-made caves carved into the cliff, adjacent to a huge natural cave, 60 metres long, and once fortified by an ancient wall.

In 1989, Dr Zvi Ilan was the first Israeli archaeologist to investigate these sites, which he identified as the town of Arbel and the Arbel cave village respectively. From coin and ceramic finds, he dated the foundation of the town of Arbel to c. 120 BCE and that of the Arbel cave village to c. 100 BCE. Around the same time, a demographic shift is observed in the archaeological record of the whole area, indicating the replacement of a Syrophenician population by Jews from Judaea. Indeed, it is well known that Galilee was conquered and annexed by the Hasmonean king Aristobulus in 103 BCE, opening up this area to migration from Judaea and the south. Regarding the unique collection of caves that he named the Arbel cave village, Zvi Ilan was intrigued not only by the many cisterns and *miqva'ot* he found there, but also by the huge, fortified cave, which he intended to excavate. This work was never started, for he died the following year. No further excavation has been done at the Arbel cave village, except for an archaeological ground survey conducted by Uzi Leibner (1999–2004), as part of a larger survey in Eastern Galilee.<sup>11</sup>

Arbel and the surrounding area have a remarkable history. Josephus tells us that it was the scene of violent conflict during the Civil War (40–37 BCE), when Herod's army camped on Mt. Arbel for several months in 38 BCE, in order to expel the cave-dwelling 'brigands' who were making life impossible for the Arbel residents (*JW* 1.304-307).<sup>12</sup> From this, we learn that Herod had allies at Arbel whom he came to help, although the people of this region were well-known for their loyalty to the Hasmonean dynasty and to Herod's arch-rival, the recently enthroned Mattathias Antigonus. From the mention of deprived and dispossessed 'brigands', it can be inferred that there was also a social crisis here—a lack of sufficient resources—even though it was a region blessed with abundant water and fertile land.

From these historical references, from the results of Leibner's archaeological survey and from careful observation of the outstanding features of the Arbel cave village, a new theory has been proposed, asserting that Arbel and the surrounding area was settled and farmed by Essenes, and that the Arbel cave village itself was built and occupied by a male Essene community from around 100 BCE, at about the same time the Essenes settled at Qumran.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. The Provenance of the Parables of Enoch

Naturally, the question arises as to whether there is evidence of scribal activity in the Arbel cave village, as at Qumran. No pens, inkwells or scroll-jars have yet been found, or even looked for, but only 30 kms from Arbel, Lake Semechonitis (nowadays called Lake Huleh) was then one

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uninterrupted from that distant past to the time of those genres' creation", Uzi Leibner, *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Galilee*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 127, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009; 264.

<sup>11</sup> Sites 35 and 39 respectively in Leibner, *Settlement and History*, 237 and 242.

<sup>12</sup> The works of Flavius Josephus are abbreviated as follows: *JW* refers to his *Jewish War*, *Ant* to his *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Life* to his *Autobiography*.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. John Ben-Daniel, *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem: Origins, History and Influence*, Qumranica Mogilanensia series 20, Mogilany, Poland: Enigma Press, 2023; 7-36. Also in *The Qumran Chronicle*, Vol. 30, Dec 2022, 43-76. Locally, these Essenes were called 'Herod's like-minded' (*JW* 1.326; *Ant* 14.450) or 'Herodians' (*Mk* 3:6, 8:15 p45, 12:13; *Mt* 22:16), because of their support for, and loyalty to, King Herod; cf. Joan Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea*, Oxford: OUP, 2012; 109-30.

of the largest habitats of papyrus outside Egypt.<sup>14</sup> The innovative use of papyrus in this area could explain why ‘writing with ink and papyrus’ was included among the teachings of the rebel angel *Penemue* (*IEn* 69:8-11), and arouses the suspicion that the Parables of Enoch (*IEn* 37–71) may have been composed here.<sup>15</sup>

On closer examination, the text of the Parables of Enoch does indeed evoke several other topographical features of the Arbel cave village: i) the description of the ‘dwellings of the righteous’ in heaven (*IEn* 39:4-5, 41:2, 48:1; cf. Jn 14:2) resembles the individual hewn habitations in the cave village more than the communal ‘hollow place’ in a rock, in the original description (*IEn* 22:1,9); ii) the ‘ropes of the righteous’ as a metaphor for trust in God’s name (*IEn* 61:3; cf. 46:8) seems to have been modelled on the actual ropes used to reach the higher caves in the cave village, and iii) the rebel angels’ descent on Mt. Hermon, mentioned twice in the text (*IEn* 39:1-2, 64:1-2), would have been an important reference point for the author, constantly made present by the magnificent views of Mt. Hermon, 70 kms distant in a northeasterly direction.

But there is more compelling evidence that the Arbel cave village was the home of the author of the Book of Parables. Firstly, the author can be identified as a full member of an Essene community, because his unique literary act of recording and preserving the names of the rebel angels (*IEn* 69:1-12)<sup>16</sup> represents his adherence to one of the oaths of Essene membership (cf. *JW* 2.142). Secondly, when the text refers to its target audience as ‘the congregation of the righteous’ (*IEn* 38:1, 46:8, 53:6, 62:8), it is using a technical term denoting their own community—a term that is found in other Essene writings (e.g., CD 20:2-3; 1QS 5:20; 4Q171 2:5). Thirdly, the author’s description of the eschatological war (*IEn* 56:5–57:3) symbolically alludes to events in the Civil War that took place in the Arbel area between 40-37 BCE, but is attributed to the ancient Patriarch Enoch and projected into the future as prophecy *ex-eventu*. In this form, it is useful not only for dating the text to Herod’s reign,<sup>17</sup> but also for locating the author to a place overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar, which perfectly matches the location of the Arbel cave village.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the social crisis leading to brigandage in this area coincides precisely with a rapid doubling of the population in Eastern Galilee, between 60–50 BCE, as revealed by Uzi Leibner’s archaeological survey, which in turn is best explained by massive internal migration and overpopulation caused by the ‘Judaean land settlement’ of Pompey and Gabinius (63–54 BCE). The resulting oversaturation of productive land, coupled with private ownership of large tracts, including the entire plain of Ginnosar, more than adequately explains

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<sup>14</sup> In 1907, before the swamps were drained (1951-1958), there was a floating mass of papyrus measuring 10 x 2.5 kms to the north of the lake, whose dimensions were then 4.8 x 5.6 kms (*Studies in Galilee*, Ernest W. Gurney Masterman, Chicago: University Press, 1909; 25-26). The area of papyrus and swamp may have been even larger in antiquity, because of clearing caused by human activities since then. It is possible that papyrus was introduced by the Egyptians when they conquered this area around 1450 BCE.

<sup>15</sup> Although the text survives only in the Ge’ez language, because it has been preserved up to the present only in the Ethiopian Church, scholars have good grounds for believing that it was originally written in Aramaic, in the Land of Israel. It was then translated into Greek, probably in Egypt, before being acquired by the Ethiopian Church in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, translated into Ge’ez and included in their Biblical Canon. The oldest surviving manuscripts date from 15-16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>16</sup> Loren Stuckenbruck informs us that, apart from the Parables of Enoch, the Book of Giants and the name ‘Azazel’, and “despite the influence of the Enochic accounts, the names of the chief angelic perpetrators of evil are conspicuously absent outside the earliest Enoch tradition” (*The Myth of the Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2017; 82).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. James H. Charlesworth, ‘Can we discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch’, in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 457-59, and Luca Arcari, ‘A Symbolic transformation of a Historical Event: The Parthian Invasion in Josephus and the Parables of Enoch’, 478-86, in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*. Also, Leslie Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, New York/London: Bloomsbury, 2011; 19-21.

<sup>18</sup> See n. 13.

the social setting of the Parables of Enoch and its uniquely judgmental stance against ‘the landowners’. All this amounts to persuasive evidence that the author of the Book of Parables was an Essene who lived at the Arbel cave village in the latter part of the first century BCE.<sup>19</sup> It was a time of great messianic expectation<sup>20</sup> and what he wrote, under the pseudonym of Enoch, was an ascent apocalypse conveying a messianic prophecy.

The seer Enoch is taken up to the divine throne room in heaven where he describes the preparations for the final judgment by a human figure, who is variously referred to as ‘that son of man’, ‘this son of man’ or just the ‘son of man’ (16 times), and is also called the ‘Chosen One’ (16 times), the ‘Righteous One’ (2 times), and the ‘Anointed One’ (i.e. the Messiah, 2 times). This divinely appointed human figure is the revealer of heavenly mysteries (*IEn* 46:3), the saviour of the righteous (*IEn* 48:4-7, 61:1-13, 62:13-16), and the judge of the rebel angels, the kings, the mighty and impenitent sinners (*IEn* 62–63). The profile of this messianic figure is drawn from several biblical sources, especially from the ‘one like a son of man’ in Daniel (Dn 7:13-14), the anointed king in the Psalms (Pss 2, 110; also Is 11:1-5), and from the chosen and righteous servant in Isaiah (Is 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-11, 52:13–53:12, 61:1-3). Through its allusions to these biblical texts, the text projects a composite representation of the role and mission of a divinely chosen person, who is both the saviour and the judge of human beings.

Generations of scholars and churchmen have been struck by the correspondence between the messianic figure at the centre of the Parables of Enoch and the various New Testament reports on the life and sayings of Jesus Christ. Only recently, however, have they been able to study this correspondence in depth, thanks to the efforts of a few dedicated language experts and textual critics. The purpose of this study is to reopen the question of influence in the light of the discovery of the Arbel cave village, its Essene occupation and its identification as the home of the author of the Parables of Enoch.

#### 4. The State of the Question

To date, discussion of the relationship between the Parables of Enoch and the Gospel accounts of Jesus has focused mainly on the New Testament use of the term ‘the Son of Man’ (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*), because of its similarity to the phrase ‘that son of man’, or ‘this son of man’, or ‘the son of man’, used in the Parables of Enoch in reference to the central messianic figure.<sup>21</sup>

The first mention of ‘the son of man’ in the text refers to this figure in a scene that is based on Daniel’s vision of the ‘one like a son of man’ (*ke-bar enash*) coming on the clouds of heaven, into the presence of the Ancient of Days (Dn 7:13-14; *IEn* 46:1-4, 47:3–48:6). However, the Parables of Enoch goes on to interpret and develop this vision in ways that go far beyond Daniel’s vision,

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<sup>19</sup> For a complete presentation of the evidence, see Ben-Daniel, *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem*, 89-120.

<sup>20</sup> There appears to have been a general expectation that the Messiah would appear early in the first century, due to the Essene interpretation of Daniel’s 490-year scheme, see Roger T. Beckwith, ‘The Year of the Messiah: Jewish and Early Christian Chronologies, and their Eschatological Consequences’, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic, 2001; 217-75; especially: “Essene expectation must have reached fever-pitch towards the end of the first century B.C., with the eschatological war already overdue, and the Messiahs of Levi and Israel expected in the last of Daniel’s 70 weeks, between 10 B.C. and A.D. 2”, op. cit. 265.

<sup>21</sup> ‘That son of man’ occurs 11 times, ‘this son of man’ only once and ‘the son of man’ four times (where the definite article is determined by the context), amounting to 16 times in total (cf. George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia Series, Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2012; 113-114). Since Ge’ez does not have the definite article, the demonstrative adjective (this, that) is often used instead of the Greek article, to indicate a definite subject or object. So, in all 16 occurrences, ‘son of man’ refers to a particular figure in the text, who we will henceforth refer to as ‘the son of man’ in English. In one additional occurrence (*IEn* 60:10) it refers personally to Enoch, as a term of address.

especially in its representation of ‘the son of man’ as a revealer of heavenly mysteries, and finally as the judge of mankind and angels. These differences make it possible to distinguish whether the New Testament’s use of ‘the Son of Man’ derives from Daniel’s vision of ‘one like a son of man’, or from Enoch’s vision of ‘the son of man’. George Nicklesburg explains how it can be traced specifically to the Parables of Enoch:

“The earliest explicit references to Jesus as Son of Man occur in Mark and in material derived from Q, the hypothetical sayings source that Matthew and Luke used along with Mark to create the major part of their Gospels. Mark 13:26 and 14:62 quote Dan 7:14 in their reference to the coming of the Son of Man. But the judicial function of the Son of Man in these passages and in Mark 8:38 and its Q parallel (Matt 10:32-33 || Luke 12:8-9) reflects the interpretation of Daniel 7 in the Parables of Enoch rather than simple dependence on Daniel 7, where the one like a son of man is enthroned after the judgment. The connection between 1 Enoch 62-63 and Mark 8:38 par. is especially close; both portray the Son of Man as the heavenly vindicator of the persecuted righteous”.<sup>22</sup>

On a grammatical level, the fact that ‘like a son of man’ in Daniel 7:13 is indefinite, and merely descriptive, sets it apart from the analogous terms in the Parables of Enoch and in the New Testament, both of which are definite and function as identifiers of the central messianic figure. The closest linguistic parallel to the New Testament’s use of the title ‘the Son of Man’ does indeed appear to be the quasi-titular use of ‘the son of man’ in the Parables.

The next challenge is to explain how the quasi-titular ‘the son of man’, in the Parables of Enoch, became the titular ‘the Son of Man’ (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*) adopted by Jesus in the New Testament. The question has an important linguistic aspect, studiously examined by Geza Vermes in modern times: “It has long been recognized that the expression “the son of man” is not genuinely Greek, but represents the Hellenized version of a phrase current in ordinary, possibly colloquial, Galilean Aramaic spoken in the first century CE”.<sup>23</sup> It is now widely accepted that the New Testament title ‘*ho huios tou anthrōpou*’ (literally ‘the son of the man’) is the Greek translation of an Aramaic original and, since it is preceded by the definite article, the original is likely to have been the definite, single form, *bar nasha* (בַּר נִשְׂאָ). This conjecture must then be informed by the fact that, in the spoken Galilean dialect of the time, the guttural letters (ע, ה, ה, א) tended to be dropped or elided, so the definite and indefinite forms, *bar nasha* and *bar nash* respectively, would have been pronounced the same. As a result, listeners would have understood *bar nash(a)* in various ways—anything from ‘a human being’, ‘one’, or ‘someone’, up to and including ‘the man’, understood by some hearers as a reference to Jesus himself. Clearly, the use of the expression ‘*bar nash(a)*’ gave room for considerable latitude of interpretation and ambiguity.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> George W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001; 83. Also see Sabino Chialà, ‘The Son of Man: The Evolution of an Expression’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 153-178; Leslie Walck, ‘The Parables of Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels’, *Paradigm Shift*, 231-268; Lester Grabbe “‘Son of Man’: Its Origin and Meaning in Second Temple Judaism”, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions and Intertextuality: Early Judaism and its Literature*, eds. L. Stuckenbruck, G. Boccaccini, Atlanta GA: SBL Press, 2016; 169-197.

<sup>23</sup> Geza Vermes, ‘The Son of Man Debate Revisited (1960–2012)’, *Paradigm Shift*, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Bar nasha* is the definite form (‘the son of man’) and *bar nash* is the indefinite form (‘a son of man’). According to Vermes, these forms had lost their grammatical distinction and were used interchangeably in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century rabbinical sources he examined, and this followed a progressive fading of the distinction in Aramaic nouns (absolute and emphatic) since the pre-Christian era (cf. *Paradigm Shift*, 6, 9-12, 15). Combined with the lack of distinction between the two forms in speech, as noted above, the expression *bar nash(a)* would indeed have been understood as a common expression for ‘a/the man’, ‘one’ or ‘someone’, thus matching Vermes’ astute observation that “While for modern New Testament scholars “son of man” is a problem, it did not seem to be so in Jesus’ age. It was neither unclear, nor shocking, for Galilean audiences. No one ever asked what he meant when he referred to himself as “the son of man”, nor did any of his critics query the legitimacy of its use. It appeared as a common, everyday turn of phrase”, *Paradigm Shift*, 3.

An important study by Geza Vermes on ancient Aramaic usage confirmed that the term ‘son of man’ could have been understood in two separate ways: firstly as a generic reference to a member of the human species (‘a/the man’, ‘a/the human being’, one, someone), and secondly as a circumlocution pronounced by the subject, in this case Jesus himself, which Vermes defines as “evasive or equivocal talk demanded by particular circumstances”.<sup>25</sup> Vermes went on to demonstrate that the term, *bar nasha*, was used exclusively by Jesus as a ‘circumlocutional self-reference’, and that, in the ancient Aramaic sources examined by him, there is no evidence that ‘the Son of Man’ was recognized as a title in Second Temple period. This view is backed up by the passage in John’s Gospel where the crowds ask Jesus “Who is this Son of Man?” (Jn 12:34). Nevertheless, basing themselves on New Testament Greek usage and context, a number of scholars and churchmen insist that the Greek rendering ‘*ho huios tou anthrōpou*’ serves as a title for the eschatological representative of the holy people, deriving either directly from the ‘one like a son of man’ (*ke-bar enash*) in the Book of Daniel (Dn 7:13-14), or indirectly via the Parables of Enoch. Framed as opposing positions, scholars have long been divided over this issue.<sup>26</sup>

The impasse was apparently resolved by asserting that the New Testament passages, in which ‘the Son of Man’ is interpreted as a title for the eschatological representative of the holy people, were invented by the Gospel authors and the Early Church in an attempt to make sense of the death and vindication of Jesus. For example, James Dunn concludes “The emergence of the Son of Man as a title in the Jesus tradition, may most simply be explained by the Early Christians transforming Jesus’ own characteristic idiomatic self-reference into a title”.<sup>27</sup> However, this explanation is untenable for the following reasons:

- a) The expression ‘the Son of Man’ (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*) occurs 85 times in the New Testament, and in all but four of these, i.e. 81 times, it occurs in the Gospels in the form of a personal title with the definite article used by Jesus himself. It is only ever uttered by Jesus himself, and no other person ever addresses him or refers to him by this term. On the basis of the criteria of ‘dissimilarity’ (the unique use of this title by Jesus himself) and ‘multiple attestation’ (its occurrence in sources of diverse origin), the attribution of this title to Jesus, in reference to himself, is now deemed to be authentic.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, this title appears to have been his preferred self-designation—a unique self-referential expression. Most scholars now agree that the origin of the title ‘the Son of Man’ was Jesus himself.
- b) As a title ‘the Son of Man’ does not seem to have been familiar to the general population of the time, as there is no record in the Gospels, or in any other contemporary writings, of any speculation or discussion concerning such a figure.<sup>29</sup> On the contrary, this title is only ever uttered by Jesus himself, no one else refers to him by this term and no one else in history, as

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<sup>25</sup> *Paradigm Shift*, 8. Vermes had previously stated “that the real problem lies in the inability or unwillingness... to grasp the purpose of a circumlocution of the type envisaged and to perceive the underlying psychological issues.” This leads up to our view of the “particular circumstances” affecting Jesus’ mission, and to a new explanation for his use of ‘the Son of Man’ as a ‘circumlocutional self-reference’ (see later).

<sup>26</sup> Leslie Walck sums up the current state of the debate as follows: “The dialogue between Geza Vermes and Joseph Fitzmyer has opened an ongoing debate over whether Son of Man referred to a pre-existing concept from Judaism, or whether it was simply a modest form of self-designation. The critical issue is whether Jesus used it only for himself in an indirect way, or whether he used it with the content of the heavenly figure in mind”, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Vol 1*, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2003; 759-61. Also, Simon J. Joseph, *The Nonviolent Messiah: Jesus, Q, and the Enochic Tradition*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014; 130-133.

<sup>28</sup> David deSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James and Jude*, 136-137. See also Simon Joseph, *Nonviolent Messiah*, 130-31, esp. the references in n. 54 to the “many scholars (who) think that Jesus used this expression”,

<sup>29</sup> James Dunn, ‘The Son of Man in Mark’, *Paradigm Shift*, 33-34.

far as we know, has ever claimed to be ‘the Son of Man’. Vermes found no evidence of its use as a title in ancient Aramaic sources. In every first-century writing, other people addressed Jesus, or referred to him, by different titles, such as Christ or Messiah, Rabbi, Lord, Son of God or Saviour.<sup>30</sup> It is highly unlikely that, after his death and resurrection, the authors of the Gospels would have attributed to Jesus a title that was so little known and ambiguous, when their aim was to spread the Gospel far and wide (cf. Acts 2:36).

- c) In the second century CE, the term ‘Son of Man’ changed its meaning. Instead of appearing as a title for Jesus Christ, it was used as a designation for his human nature, in apposition to his divine nature implicit in the title ‘Son of God’. It hardly needs to be said that this change in meaning would not have been acceptable to the Early Church if the title ‘the Son of Man’ had been crafted intentionally by its founders for another purpose, i.e. to make sense of the death and vindication of Jesus.

These observations contradict the claim that the title ‘the Son of Man’ was invented by the Early Church and support the prevailing view that it originated with Jesus as a reference to himself and his mission as the eschatological representative of the people of God. Taking this conclusion into account, it appears that for most of those who listened to Jesus, ‘the Son of Man’ just meant ‘the man’, or ‘a man’, or even the impersonal ‘one’, or ‘someone’, but for those who were closest to him and knew the Scriptures it referred to a very special man—the eschatological leader of the people of God first described by Daniel (Dn 7:13-14) and later reposed as the central messianic figure in the Parables of Enoch (cf. *1En* 46:1-4, 47:3–48:6). Indeed, from the moment that this ‘divine figure’ came to be interpreted as the Messiah by the circles that produced the Parables of Enoch (cf. *1En* 48:10, 52:4), the title ‘the Son of Man’ would have been understood, by a select group, as an alternative title for the ‘Messiah’.

Seyoon Kim was among the first to pick up on this ambiguity and suggest that “Jesus may have used the self-designation with the dual purpose of revealing his identity discreetly to those who had ears to hear and hiding it from those who had no ears to hear. With “the ‘Son of Man’” then Jesus intended to reveal himself to be the divine figure who was the inclusive representative (or the head) of the eschatological people of God”.<sup>31</sup>

We are now in a position to explain Jesus’ preference for this title and, at the same time, identify what particular circumstances demanded its use as a ‘circumlocutionary self-reference’. The death of King Herod in 4 BCE initiated a period of great messianic expectation according to Flavius Josephus, who recounts the appearance of at least three messianic pretenders in the immediate aftermath of his death: Judas the Galilean, a leader of the Zealots; Simon, a former slave of Herod the Great; and Athronges, a shepherd with four militant brothers (*Ant* 17.271-284; Acts 5:37). All three were promptly arrested and executed by the Roman authorities, who undoubtedly saw them as a threat to Roman imperial interests and security. Similar treatment was meted out to the leaders and followers of later prophetic and messianic movements. Between 44-46 CE, the Roman authorities crucified Simon and James, sons of Judas the Galilean (*Ant* 20.102) and attacked the 400 followers of a certain Theudas, who was then beheaded (*Ant* 20. 97-98; Acts 5:36). A decade later there was a succession of revolutionary movements (*JW* 2.258-259, *Ant* 20.160-161,167), including that of an Egyptian messianic pretender and his band of 4,000 men (*JW* 2.261-264, *Ant* 20.169-172, Acts 21:38), followed by a similar movement around 60 CE, all of which came to a violent end at the hands of the Roman army (*Ant* 20.186-188).

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<sup>30</sup> Lee Martin McDonald, ‘The *Parables of Enoch* in Early Christianity’, *A Paradigm Shift*, 347.

<sup>31</sup> Seyoon Kim, *The “Son of Man” as the Son of God* (WUNT 30, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983; 35-36. Pages 32-37 of this volume are of great help in clarifying the complexity of ‘the Son of Man’ debate.

Faced with such a stringent counter-insurgent policy in the first century CE, it was clearly ‘suicidal’ to claim to be, or to allow oneself to become known as, the Messiah of Israel (cf. Jn 19:19-22). It was a sure path to arrest and immediate execution by the Roman authorities, for the title had already acquired strong military and political overtones.<sup>32</sup>

Adoption of the title ‘the Son of Man’ was the perfect solution for this predicament, for it allowed Jesus to identify himself covertly as the Messiah without overtly using that title. In this way, it played an important part in the so-called ‘messianic secret’ (cf. Mt 16:20; Mk 8:30, 9:21)—the way by which Jesus could complete his mission successfully without being prematurely arrested and executed by the Roman authorities. The employment of the title ‘the Son of Man’ as an alternative title for the Messiah would have been understood by only a select few, who likely included his closest disciples.

In summary, Jesus’ use of the title ‘the Son of Man’ as a self-designation, recorded in the Gospels, is authentic by the modern criteria of authenticity. This is confirmed by its unusual Greek construction, which points to a semitic original and, in particular, to an expression that carries a double significance in Aramaic. It is quite possible that Jesus used this ambiguous title instead of ‘Messiah’, in order to avoid arrest and execution by the Roman authorities—the underlying rationale for the so-called ‘messianic secret’. Because of its obscurity as a title, and its linguistic ambiguity, it occurs only in the speech of Jesus. As a term of address, it is never used by others conversing with him, or confessing belief in him and it is rarely mentioned outside the Gospels. After his crucifixion, less ambiguous titles are used for Jesus and ‘the Son of Man’ changes its meaning in the second century CE. All of these characteristics militate against its fabrication by the Early Church and make a compelling case for the use of ‘the Son of Man’ as a unique and preferred self-designation by Jesus himself, as reported in the Gospels.

## 5. The Question of Influence

In the case of a literary relationship, influence can be discerned by a high degree of correspondence on several levels: thematic similarities, similarities in narrative (plot/action), and linguistic/verbal parallels. The highest degrees of influence are reflected by direct quotations, followed by recognizable references and allusions, and least of all by common motifs and expressions.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the level of influence can be difficult to assess if, for one reason or another, the parallels are uniformly weak, the wording is not the same, or if we are considering the influence of a document on a person or group, whose discourse relied on human recall and not on direct quotations. In any of these situations, the resemblance may not be direct, but indirect, through a common source document (often lost), or an oral tradition. *In these cases, high degrees of influence can be established if, and only if, the original document has at least one unique feature, which appears in the work of a later author, or in the expression of the person who is suspected of having been influenced by it, or both, as in the case of an author describing a person.* The recurrence of the unique feature, a singularity against all odds, points to a high level of influence from the one to the other. A common feature that is ‘unique’ (i.e., not known to have been

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<sup>32</sup> An obvious point, noted by Simon Joseph, *Nonviolent Messiah*, 127. The explanation that follows is similar, if not identical, to the one given by S. Kim, as it relates to the success of Jesus Christ’s mission: “To express this “messianic” task of his [of gathering and leading God’s eschatological people] while avoiding misunderstanding that was likely to arise with a “messianic” movement, this designation “the ‘Son of Man’” was not only admirably suitable, but perhaps the only possible one”, *The “Son of Man” as the Son of God*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> I am grateful to Leslie Baynes (‘The Parables of Enoch and Luke’s Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus’, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions and Intertextuality*, 2016; 130-31), for her comments on Thomas L. Brodie’s guidelines for identifying parallels, and avoiding ‘parallelomania’, summarized from *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings*, 2004; 44-46.

transmitted by any other source) and explicable only in terms of direct relationship (i.e., first-hand, not mediated by others) is highly likely to represent a significant degree of “influence”.<sup>34</sup> Satisfaction of the above conditions establishes high-level influence of a certain document on later authors and hearers, while not precluding the “influence” of other texts, biblical or extra-biblical, on the same authors or persons.

Before considering the unique aspects of the central messianic figure in the Parables of Enoch that are uniquely reflected in the Gospel accounts of Jesus, it is important to stress that many other aspects of this figure in the Parables are reflected in the Gospels’ portrayal of Jesus, but without the same degree of uniqueness. For example, in the Parables of Enoch, the figure referred to as ‘the son of man’ is not only identified with the Messiah (the ‘Anointed One’), but is also given the titles of ‘Chosen One’ and ‘Righteous One’—titles which overtly allude to the chosen and righteous servant in Isaiah (Is 42:1-9 [61:1-3], 49:1-13, 50:4-9, 52:13–53:12). So, every reflection of the ‘Chosen One’ and his mission in the New Testament (e.g., Lk 23:25, Mt 11:2-6; Mt 12:18-21, Lk 1:79, 2:32; Jn 13:31, Mt 11:28, Acts 13:47) can either be traced to the original figure in Isaiah (Is 42:1-9), or to the messianic figure in the Parables (*IEn* 48:4-7), or indeed to both, for the Parables strongly evokes Isaiah’s chosen Servant and his mission. Similarly, any reference to the ‘Righteous One’ in the New Testament (Acts 3:14, 7:52, 22:14, Mk 10:45, Mt 26:28, 1Jn 2:1, Acts 8:32-36) can either be traced to its source in Isaiah (Is 53:11), or to the Book of Parables (*IEn* 38:2, 53:6), or to both, for the latter resonates with, and embraces, the former. However, in neither case, not that of the ‘Chosen One’ nor that of the ‘Righteous One’, is the link between the Parables and the mission of Jesus unique, since Jesus could have been influenced by the Prophecy of Isaiah or by the Book of Parables, or by both. By contrast, there is a unique association of ‘the son of man’ in the Parables with the Messiah and subsequently with Jesus’ unique adoption and expression of this term, as recorded in the New Testament (cf. Mt 16:13-20 et par.). The singularity of this association is as close as we can get to ‘proof’ that Jesus was uniquely influenced by the Parables of Enoch because it is not found in any other literary source from that time. Oral sources can be discounted, too, because—as mentioned above—there is no record of anyone discussing, or expecting, or ever hearing of, a Messiah with the title of ‘the Son of Man’.

## 6. Evidence of Influence on Jesus of Nazareth

In the light of contemporary research, which dates the Parables of Enoch to the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, a mere 20–25 years before the public ministry of Jesus, scholars have observed that this is the first known literary work to identify the heavenly figure of ‘the son of man’, based on Dan 7:13-14, as the ‘Anointed One’—the ‘Messiah’. D.S. Russell explains the situation as follows:

“The ideas of the Son of Man and the Messiah are not only different in their origins, they also represent in their development two separate strands of eschatological expectation and indicate two distinct emphases of ‘messianic’ hope. It is probable that, for the vast majority of the Jewish people,

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<sup>34</sup> Unique common feature(s) and direct relationship are the two criteria that need to be met in order to establish high level of influence. They represent the epitome of Brodie’s guidelines, set out previously. In their own ways, the same criteria are used by various scholars, e.g., Joan Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, 1997; 16; James Charlesworth, ‘The Parables of Enoch and the Apocalypse of John’, *Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins*, 2008; 230-32; id., ‘Towards a Taxonomy of Discerning Influence(s) Between Two Texts’, *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im Neuen Testament: Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75 Geburtstag*, ed. D. Sänger and M. Konradt, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* 57; Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht: Fribourg Academic Press, 2006; 41-54.

these two ideas had little or no connection with each other. Their significant association would be understood only by a relatively small group of apocalyptic writers”.<sup>35</sup>

It is exactly this unusual, even unique, association of ideas that is then employed by Jesus with the specific purpose of establishing and maintaining his ‘messianic secret’. For good reason, D.S. Russell credits Jesus with this innovation:

“As we have seen, the Synoptic Gospels indicate that, whereas Jesus frequently used the expression ‘Son of Man’ with reference to himself, he discouraged the use of the title ‘Messiah’ throughout the length of his ministry. This suggests that, at least in those Jewish circles represented by his disciples, there was at that time no obvious association between the two terms. The Davidic Messiah was a concept clearly understood by them; the ‘Son of Man’—whatever they may have understood by it—was something altogether different. When Jesus interpreted his messiahship in terms of the Son of Man he was bringing together two concepts hitherto unequated in the thought of popular Judaism”.<sup>36</sup>

Because the Parables of Enoch was the first work of its kind to openly associate the Danielic ‘son of man’ with the Davidic Messiah,<sup>37</sup> it was unique in its time and represented a significant development over the original vision in the Book of Daniel (Dn 7:13-14). More significantly, it was a development that required the ‘Messiah Son of Man’ to have a physical and personal presence on earth (cf. *1En* 38:2, 45:4, 52:4; and arguably 47:1-2.4).

This development is enhanced further in the Parables of Enoch with the description of the Messiah Son of Man not just as the leader of the holy and righteous people of God, but also as the eschatological judge of the wicked and unrepentant (e.g., *1En* 69:27, cf. Jn 5:22). By ascribing the divine function of eschatological judgment to the Messiah Son of Man, the author of the Parables of Enoch goes far beyond the original vision in the Book of Daniel and thus renders this prophecy doubly unique.<sup>38</sup> The Parables of Enoch is unique not only in its description of the central figure, ‘the son of man’, as the Messiah (or ‘Anointed One’), but also, more shockingly, as the eschatological judge of angels and of human beings.<sup>39</sup>

The double uniqueness of the text of the Parables of Enoch is then represented faithfully in the Gospels, in those passages where Jesus Christ uses the designation ‘the Son of Man’ in reference to himself as Messiah<sup>40</sup> and as eschatological judge.<sup>41</sup> There can be little doubt that, in this aspect of his teaching, Jesus was influenced by the Parables of Enoch to such an extent that he identified with its central figure and intended to fulfil its messianic prophecy in person.

In spite of the evidence presented above, most scholars find it hard to accept the conclusion as stated, some going only so far as to concede that Jesus was influenced by the text, but that influence was not direct. For example, David deSilva writes:

“While the Parables of Enoch provide the closest comparative text for the study of Jesus’ conception of the Son of Man, it is difficult to demonstrate direct dependence. Jesus seems to know and to draw

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<sup>35</sup> D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, London: SCM Press, 1971; 332.

<sup>36</sup> Id., *Method and Message*, 334.

<sup>37</sup> Mention should be made of 4Q246, an incomplete manuscript recovered from Qumran and better known as the “Son of God” text, or the Apocryphon of Daniel. Its interpretation is complex, but it does appear to identify, in the description of a vision, an enthroned Davidic Messiah with a heavenly figure inspired by Daniel’s “one like a son of man”, though called “Son of God”. It has been dated to around 25 BCE, more or less contemporary with the Parables of Enoch (cf. John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2010, 171-190).

<sup>38</sup> In the Book of Daniel, the Ancient of Days and the court perform judgment before the ‘one like a son of man’ enters the scene (Dn 7:9-14, 23-27).

<sup>39</sup> James Charlesworth confirms: “Strikingly, within the hundreds of Jewish documents that antedate 70 CE, only in the Parables of Enoch and only within Jesus’ teachings do we find references to the Son of Man as the eschatological Judge”, ‘The Date and Provenience of the Parables of Enoch’, *Paradigm Shift*, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Mt 16:13-20; Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-20; Mt 26:63-64; Mk 14:61-62; Lk 22:67-70.

<sup>41</sup> Mt 13:41-43, 16:27, 24:30-31, 25:31-46; Mk 8:38, 13:26-27; Lk 9:26, 12:8-9, 21:27-28; Jn 5:27.

upon the traditions about the Son of Man known from the Parables of Enoch but not necessarily upon those particular texts directly".<sup>42</sup>

DeSilva is correct in affirming that direct dependence is generally difficult to demonstrate, but in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, whose messianic identity was so intimately tied to the central figure in the Parables of Enoch, it is even more difficult to believe that Jesus did not have direct contact with the text. One assumes he must have had direct contact with the entire text in order to have embraced it as a messianic prophecy pointing to himself. Nonetheless, although the argument is compelling, it still relies on an assumption. Further evidence is needed to support the conclusion that Jesus had direct access and contact with the Parables of Enoch. The evidence falls into two parts, the first concludes with a high probability and the second introduces a novel type of documentary proof.

## 7. Evidence of Direct Access

As reported above, signs of an Essene settlement have been discovered only 2 kms to the southwest of Magdala, at the Arbel cave village, a dense collection of 100 or more caves dating from 100 BCE and carved into the cliffs of Mt. Arbel. Our research on this site combines field observations with relevant historical and archaeological findings, all of which point to an Essene occupation of this cave village in antiquity.<sup>43</sup> In a separate study, religious, literary and topographical evidence is presented which locates the author of the Parables of Enoch to the same site.<sup>44</sup> In yet another study, these findings contribute to the explanation of an enduring Jewish and Christian tradition associating Arbel with the start of redemption.<sup>45</sup>

These findings throw new light on the question of direct personal contact between the Parables of Enoch and Jesus of Nazareth. Scholars have long suspected a link between Jesus and the Essenes, from the content of his teaching and his style of argument from Scripture, but there is no compelling evidence that Jesus was ever a member of the Qumran community or that he ever visited Qumran.<sup>46</sup> However, Jesus's detailed knowledge of Essene interpretation, discipline and apocalyptic worldview can be well explained if he were the guest of the Essene community at the Arbel cave village, which was only a day's walk from his hometown of Nazareth and close to the road leading down to the Sea of Galilee. The proximity of Arbel to Nazareth adds geographical plausibility to the proposal that Jesus may have had direct contact with the Parables of Enoch.

Three further observations raise the likelihood of personal contact from plausible to highly probable. When he was only twelve years old (c. 6 CE), Jesus chose to discuss the sacred Scriptures with the teachers in the Temple at Jerusalem, rather than return home with his parents (Lk 2:41-52). Furthermore, the Essene *Community Rule* (1QS 6:13-23) allowed for approved young men to join the Essene communities for two to three years before having to commit, permanently, by taking the oath of membership. Josephus confirms this option not only in writing (*JW* 2.137-142), but also in practice, for he stayed with an Essene Community when he was 16 years old (c. 53–54 CE), in order to learn more about the movement (*Life* 10-11). It is entirely

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<sup>42</sup> DeSilva, *The Jewish Teachers of Jesus, James and Jude*, 139.

<sup>43</sup> See n. 13 above.

<sup>44</sup> See n. 19 above.

<sup>45</sup> See n. 9 above.

<sup>46</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the writings from Qumran, see Simon J. Joseph, *Jesus, the Essenes, and Christian Origins: New Light on Ancient Texts and Communities*, 2018. On a more popular level, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Revealing the Jewish Roots of Christianity* by John Bergsma, 2019. The Qumran writings provide the best available evidence, so far, for the link between the Jesus movement and the rival ('Arbelite') branch of Essenes that produced the Parables of Enoch and other pseudepigraphical/apocryphal works.

possible, therefore, that while still an adolescent, around 10–15 CE, the Scripture-loving Jesus may have chosen to visit the Essene community at Mt. Arbel for a limited period of time. If this were the case, he would have joined the community just a few years after the completion of the Parables of Enoch, when it would have been recited and discussed as a matter of intense interest.<sup>47</sup> The dating of the Parables to the turn of the era establishes temporal plausibility for direct contact between the Parables of Enoch and Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus' use of the enigmatic title 'the Son of Man' during his public mission, and his avoidance of the popular title 'Messiah' (the aptly named 'messianic secret'), was conditioned, as noted above, by the need to restrict its recognition to a select circle of followers, until he had completed his earthly mission. The Essene community of Arbel, and other communities of the same religious movement, satisfy these conditions, as all members took an oath "to report none of their secrets to others" (*JW* 2.141). Similar to other writings of the group (cf. *4Ezra* 14:26, 45-48), the Parables of Enoch would have been shared only among members and trusted guests. This level of secrecy was even more important for a prophecy like the Parables of Enoch, because it expresses a powerful condemnation of the ruling powers (the kings, the mighty and the landowners), who would have considered it defamatory, disloyal and inciting. If this prophecy were openly accessible, it would have attracted painful retribution from those it condemns.

Finally, the reason Jesus chose to start his public mission in this part of Galilee, in full view of Mount Arbel, can be well explained by the fact that he had spent time in his youth with the Essene community of the Arbel cave village, whose establishment there, on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali one hundred years before, had been inspired by the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:1-6 (cf. Mt 4:12-17). Although Jesus may have arrived at the messianic significance of this area independently of the Arbel Essene community, it is more likely that he became familiar with the territory and with the tradition that linked Arbel with the start of redemption as a result of a visit to this community.

For the proposal that Jesus came into direct personal contact with the Parables of Enoch there is 1) geographical plausibility, 2) temporal plausibility, 3) explanatory power regarding his familiarity with Essene hermeneutics and apocalyptic worldview, the enigma of his adoption of 'the Son of Man' as a title, and the reason he began his ministry by the Sea of Galilee.

## 8. Counter-Evidence of Influence

The second source of evidence is closely related to Jesus's postulated, and highly probable, stay with the Essene community at Mt. Arbel. It concerns the manner in which he came to identify with the 'the son of man' in the Parables of Enoch, and to adopt the title 'the Son of Man' as his preferred self-designation. If these arguments are accepted, the question of influence can be settled beyond reasonable doubt.

The main obstacle to showing Jesus of Nazareth identified himself with the central character in the Parables of Enoch is encountered in the last chapter of the text—chapter 71. This chapter describes a scene in which Enoch, the righteous ante-diluvian scribe and seer, ascends to the highest heaven and is transformed into 'the son of man' whom he had previously seen and described in earlier parts of the book (*1En* 71:13-14; cf. *1En* 46:1-3). The implications of this sudden and surprising merging of the seer with the object of his vision, the Messiah Son of Man, are immediately obvious to the reader: if Enoch had long ago been appointed to the role of 'the son of man', as a result of his 'divinization' described in chapter 71, then Jesus would appear to be mistaken in adopting the term 'the Son of Man' in reference to himself.

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<sup>47</sup> See n. 20 above.

A majority of scholars, however, consider chapter 71 as a later addition to the Parables of Enoch, because of its many inconsistencies with the main body of the text. It is therefore doubtful that Jesus would have encountered chapter 71 in the version of the Book of Parables that he was familiar with in his day.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, because of the negative effect of chapter 71 on the conclusions reached above, it is imperative to refute it, before analyzing it to understand why it was added to the text, and what additional information it can yield.

There are many good reasons for regarding chapter 71 as a secondary addition to the original text of the Book of Parables<sup>49</sup> and at least four different ways of demonstrating it: i) by reception and redaction history, ii) by tradition history, iii) by literary criticism and iv) with theological discernment.

i) The first approach leads to the overwhelming conviction that Jesus was correct in taking the term Son of Man to himself, because it has passed the test of time and a large proportion of the world's population nowadays identifies him with that messianic title and role. On the contrary, very few people are even aware that Enoch was also appointed to that exalted position, so the claim that he is 'the son of man' appears to have failed. The reason for this is not hard to discern, for Enoch's 'divinization', or apotheosis, in chapter 71 places his commission after his divine mission, resulting in an inversion of the normal sequence of commission followed by mission. 'Putting the cart before the horse' in this way arouses the suspicion of a literary invention in the narrative of events, especially since there is no explanation of how, in his divinely exalted state, Enoch then managed to communicate his heavenly experience back to earth. Richard Bauckham explains this strange denouement in a telling way: "...it is entirely possible that chapter 71 is an original and integral part of the book and that the revelation of the identity of the "son of man" was intended to surprise readers, like the solution to a murder mystery revealed at the end of a modern detective novel".<sup>50</sup> The implication that the author's intention was to entertain his readers by maintaining suspense until the end points to a literary device called "ironic reversal". The prophecy of imminent eschatological judgment by the Messiah Son of Man, to which the entire text of the Parables has been moving, is suddenly redirected into the hands of the ancient Patriarch Enoch, whose main role is no longer to be the divine agent of eschatological judgment, but patron of peace and guide for the righteous (*IEn* 71:15-17).<sup>51</sup> In this way, the final chapter offers a dramatic anti-climax, because, in conjunction with the Noahide interpolations (*IEn* 65:1-69:1), it conflates the eschatological judgment with the judgment that took place in the time of Noah and the great Flood,<sup>52</sup> and thereby precludes a contemporary actualization by Jesus or

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<sup>48</sup> The dating of the addition will be discussed below.

<sup>49</sup> *Contra* Richard Bauckham who considers chapter 71 to be an integral part of the Parables of Enoch and has recently published his arguments for this view in "*Son of Man*": *Volume One*. He maintains "there is no good reason to consider chapters 70-71 secondary", op. cit. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Bauckham, "*Son of Man*": *Volume One*, 80. The inverted order does not therefore upset Bauckham, who goes on to explain the main part of the text (*IEn* 37-70) as a proleptic view of Enoch's future messianic status, to be disclosed as a surprise to the reader in chapter 71. It must have shocked Enoch even more, for he failed to recognize himself in this role until he was informed of it in the final chapter (*IEn* 71:14).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg's commentary on *IEn* 71:13-17: "Although Enoch is not restored from his prostrate position (an authorial, redactional slip?), the Head of Days (or an accompanying angel) identifies Enoch as the Son of Man whose eschatological status and function Enoch has witnessed throughout the Parables. Strikingly, however, he is not the messenger of doom described in Chaps. 14-16 or the executor of judgment on the kings and the mighty and the demons announced, depicted, and emphasized in most of the relevant passages in the Parables. Enoch, the Son of Man, is the eschatological patron and companion of the righteous, mentioned in this capacity only in 38:2; 39:6-8; 48:4-7; and 62:7-8,14" (Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 327).

<sup>52</sup> Understood in this way, the author of chapter 71 can be identified with the Noahide interpolator. For textual correlation, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 294-296, esp. 295 (in answer to question 2: "*How does the interpolated material function in its present setting in the Parables?*").

anyone else. Understood in this way, chapter 71 and the Noahide interpolations are not original parts of the text, but elements of a cleverly crafted redactional layer whose purpose was to confound the original meaning of the text, while at the same time elevating Enoch to unforeseen heights.<sup>53</sup>

ii) The second approach focuses on relevant ‘history of traditions’ research presented at the Enoch Seminar meeting at Camaldoli, Italy in 2005. By studying the titles and roles of the Patriarch Enoch in the earliest traditions about him and tracing their trajectory up through the centuries to those of his exalted counterpart Metatron of Talmudic times, Andrei Orlov made an important observation on the relation of this trajectory to the profile of Enoch in the Parables of Enoch: “As I researched this transition from Enoch to Metatron, it became more and more clear to me that the roles and titles found in the Book of Parables do not represent a crucial link between the roles and titles of Enoch and the roles and titles of Metatron. Thus, a glance at the roles and titles of the seventh antediluvian hero from the point of view of the Metatron tradition, as with the earlier Enochic texts, indicates discontinuity rather than continuity”.<sup>54</sup>

For William Adler this is Orlov’s main finding:

“as in other cases, the Book of Parables is the outlier. Elsewhere in 1 Enoch, Enoch is diviner, primeval sage, expert in secrets, scribe mediator, and heavenly priest. And the titles applied to him bear some discernable relationship to at least one of these functions (mainly that of a scribe). In the Book of Parables everything is different. Here the titles “Righteous One,” “Anointed One,” “Chosen One” and “Son of Man” refer to a preexistent enthroned figure, only ambiguously connected with the Patriarch himself. Unlike the titles found in other parts of 1 Enoch, they do not appear to originate in Mesopotamian tradition. Rather they are connected with motifs from Jewish scriptures. Used almost interchangeably, these titles do not bear any clearly identifiable connection with the roles Enoch plays in the Parables. “The Book of Parables,” writes Orlov, “refuses to depict in any way Enoch’s participation in various offices that stand behind his titles.” Enoch is called “Son of Man” in the Parables, but as Orlov points out, he “in no way attempts to execute the offices pertaining to this and the other titles.” Perhaps Orlov’s most surprising finding is what he does not find, namely a connection between the Enoch of the Parables and the exalted Enoch found in the later traditions about Enoch-Metatron”.<sup>55</sup>

For those who claim that chaps. 70:3-4 and 71 of the Parables of Enoch are an integral part of the book, making sense of this “departure from the traditional pattern” is not easy. Adler suggests it represents an attempt to “mainstream” the figure of Enoch by giving him an importance that is closer to known biblical sources, but then admits that does not seem to have succeeded. The exalted titles attributed to Enoch in the Parables are “dropped almost entirely in the Merkabah tradition”, according to Orlov. Adler concludes that “a potentially promising path in the “Enoch trajectory” ends up a dead end”.<sup>56</sup> Although not discussed by Orlov or Adler, it would make better sense to regard chaps. 70:3-4 and 71 of the Parables of Enoch as a later addition, and conclude that the figure of Enoch was never intended to receive the titles and roles that are attributed to ‘that son of man’ in the rest of the book. Furthermore, if these verses were removed from the Book of Parables, Enoch would return to his traditional role as a scribe of heavenly mysteries, and the Parables could then be readmitted to a place in the “Enoch trajectory”.

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<sup>53</sup> More research is needed in order to clarify, in detail, how chapter 71 and the Noahide interpolations change the meaning of the original text of the Parables of Enoch.

<sup>54</sup> Andrei Orlov, ‘Roles and Titles of the Seventh Antediluvian Hero in the Parables of Enoch: A Departure from the Traditional Pattern’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 110-136, quote from 134.

<sup>55</sup> William Adler, ‘A Dead End in the Enoch Trajectory: A Response to Andrei Orlov’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 137-142, quote is from 137-38.

<sup>56</sup> Adler, ‘A Dead End in the Enoch Trajectory’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 142.

iii) The literary critical approach has been applied in recent decades by various specialists in the field, most effectively in the studies of Knibb, Chialà, Nickelsburg, Collins and Hannah.<sup>57</sup> Their literary dissection of the text of the Parables exposes inconsistencies in style and content between chapter 71 and the rest of the Book of Parables, as it has come down to us in the surviving Ge'ez manuscripts. Their works all point to the conclusion that chapter 71 was a later addition, a kind of appendix, to the original document. Without knowing Ge'ez, I must rely on these scholar's authority and expertise, but nevertheless find their conclusions amply supported by another observation on the incongruity of chapter 71 in its present form. After an obvious conclusion to the main body of the text written in the third person (*IEn* 70:1-2), thus mirroring the opening verse (*IEn* 37:1), Enoch returns to relate—in the first person—how, at the end of his life, he was finally taken up to the highest heaven, where he undergoes a total spiritual transformation to become, spuriously, that same divine 'son of man', whom he had seen and described in the previous chapters.<sup>58</sup> For Nickelsburg, the sudden change of pronoun from third person to first person is one of the main literary indications that it is a later redaction, coupled with the absence of any explanation of how Enoch, in his divinely exalted state, then managed to communicate his heavenly experience back to earth.<sup>59</sup> The reader is left 'up in the air' with the impression this whole chapter is an afterthought, artfully composed by another hand.

At the end of his commentary on the Parables of Enoch, Nickelsburg summarizes three literary discrepancies between the main body of the Parables and chapter 71 (the numerals in square brackets are mine):

“In conclusion, [1] the three parables and chap. 71 differ from one another in their recasting of material from the Book of Watchers. [2] The three parables and chap. 71 differ from one another in their portrayals of the function of the Son of Man. Finally, [3] some elements of both 70:3-4 and 71:3-4 are best explained as additions to the body of the Parables. If these sections, and especially chap. 71, are additions to the three Parables, there are no grounds for asserting that the “author(s)” and first transmitters of the Parables believed that the Righteous One / Chosen One, Anointed One / Son of Man was or would be the ancient Patriarch Enoch”.<sup>60</sup>

This unavoidable conclusion has not gone unchallenged by scholars intent on demonstrating the coherence of chapter 71 with the rest of the text, but their dependence on verbal and literary connections is unpersuasive, given that substantial harmonization has occurred due to textual adjustment and transmission through several languages, over two millennia, starting with the redactor who appended chapter 71. The enduring discontinuities provide better evidence for the original form of the text than any perceived continuities.

iv) The theological approach to Enoch's apotheosis in chapter 71 of the Parables of Enoch is profound and provides material for further reflection. Without presuming influence one way or

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<sup>57</sup> Sabino Chialà, *Libro delle parabole di Enoc*, Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1997; 281-291; John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2010; 196-205; 'Enoch and the Son of Man: A Response to Sabino Chialà and Helge Kvanvig', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 216-237; Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*: 320-332; Michael Knibb, 'The Structure and Composition of the Parables of Enoch', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 62-63; and the bibliography given there; Darrell D. Hannah, 'The Elect Son of Man of the Parables of Enoch', *Who is this Son of Man?": The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus*, eds. Larry W. Hurtado and Paul L. Owen, London/New York: T&T Clark International, 2011; 130-158.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 201, where Collins dismisses James VanderKam's attempt to provide a spiritual explanation for this odd situation ("Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man", ed. James Charlesworth, *Messiah*, Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1992; 169-191).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 322, 331.

<sup>60</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 332.

the other,<sup>61</sup> Daniel Boyarin was struck by the resemblance between the elevation and divinization of Enoch in 1 Enoch 70–71 and the ascension and glorification of Jesus narrated in the Gospels. Agreeing that chapters 70–71 represent a strand of tradition different from that of the main part of the Book of Parables, Boyarin concludes that the fusion of both parts “helps illuminate the cultural, religious context in which the Gospels were produced”.<sup>62</sup>

Peter Schäfer takes the matter further by stressing that, quite apart from the inconsistencies in style and content between chapter 71 and the rest of the Book of Parables (also known as ‘Similitudes’), there is an even more glaring incongruity in its theology: “the Son of Man–Enoch in chapters 70–71 is indeed a human being who becomes God, or rather godlike, but the Son of Man in the main part of the Similitudes is certainly not a God who became human, came down to earth and then returned to heaven... it is precisely the incarnation that is missing in the Similitudes”.<sup>63</sup>

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

It is therefore highly significant that the author identifies Enoch with the Messiah Son of Man by matching the words of Enoch’s commissioning in chapter 71 (*1En* 71:14) with the angel’s description of this figure earlier in the text (*1En* 46:3). So, the angel’s description:

“*This is the son of man who has righteousness, and righteousness dwells with him, and all the treasures of what is hidden he will reveal*” (*1En* 46:3)

is now applied to Enoch himself and becomes:

“*You (are) that Son of Man who was born for righteousness, and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you*” (*1En* 71:14).<sup>64</sup>

In this way, the author of chap. 71 not only removes any doubt that Enoch and the Son of Man are one and the same, but also implicitly, and imperceptibly, indicates that the incarnation has already taken place in him.

Nonetheless, to state that the divine and preexistent “Son of Man was born” would have been blasphemous to the Jewish mind at that time (cf. Jn 8:58-59),<sup>65</sup> unless the ‘incarnation’ was, by

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<sup>61</sup> Even though more and more studies are uncovering the influence of the Book of Parables on various parts of the New Testament, and its sources, it should be said that Boyarin, for reasons best known to himself, often denies the possibility of influence, going so far as to write “the Gospels are certainly not drawing on the Similitudes...”, and “Since there is no reason in the world to think these two texts influenced each other...”. *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*, New York: New Press, 2012; 82-95, quotes are from 94 and 95.

<sup>62</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*, 82-95, quote is from 94.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Schäfer, *Two Gods in Heaven: Jewish Concepts of God in Antiquity*, Princeton: Princeton Press, 2020; 49–53, quote is from 52. As we will see, the issue of Incarnation is not completely absent, but has been reduced to an inconspicuous allusion to the birth of ‘that Son of Man’ in *1En* 71:14, and his identification with Enoch.

<sup>64</sup> As noted by Nickelsburg in his comments on *1En* 71:13-14: “The present passage is the only one in the Parables that refers to the Son of Man being “born””, *1 Enoch* 2, 328. This passage and the previous one are quoted from the translation of Nickelsburg and VanderKam, in *1 Enoch* 2, 153 and 321.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed., Cambridge, MA/London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1974; 19-36. For the theology of the separation of divine and human, see the discussion in Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism, Volume 1. Christological Origins: The*

then, a familiar concept among the hearers and readers. As this seems to be case, it is reasonable to infer, firstly, that the author was addressing a Christianized audience after the Church had been established and, secondly, that he was well acquainted with the Church's proclamation of Jesus Christ's incarnation and divinity. In this early Christian context, the author's focus on the part of Enoch's afterlife that most resembled the ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ indicates that his main concern was to describe the 'divinization' of Enoch in chap. 71 in such a way as to reassign the role of the 'Son of Man' from Jesus to Enoch. As a result, Enoch's 'divinization' scene (*1En* 71:9-17) not only represents a divine aggrandizement of Enoch and his followers, but also a direct challenge to those Christians, and Essene converts to Christianity, who were attributing the 'Son of Man' role to Jesus Christ. With a few hundred carefully chosen words, the account of Enoch's divinization in chapter 71 refuted the identification of Jesus as the 'Son of Man', because Enoch had been appointed to that role long before.<sup>66</sup>

In all three approaches presented above, chapter 71 is revealed as a tendentious addition to the original text of the Parables of Enoch. It is, in fact, a carefully crafted 'anti-witness' to the Church's claims about Jesus.

## 9. The 'Anti-Witness' of Chapter 71

Recognition that the main target audience for chapter 71 was an early Christian congregation, which attributed the 'Son of Man' role to Jesus Christ, provides a handle on the dating and possible provenance of this concluding part of the Parables of Enoch. The earliest date (*terminus a quo*) would have been the establishment of the Church in Jerusalem around 35 CE, and the latest would have been 66 CE (*terminus ad quem*), for the destruction of Jerusalem is never mentioned in the text. The author was evidently close to the earliest Christian community, for he was familiar with its claims, and was a rival in every sense of the word, anxious to prevent further efflux of his own people to the early Church. His own community were clearly followers of Enoch, and bearers of the Enochic tradition.<sup>67</sup>

In all likelihood, Christian leaders became aware of this challenge when the Parables of Enoch, which was originally written by a single author and issued as a separate document,<sup>68</sup> was published in the compilation now known as *1 Enoch*, along with chapter 71 and the Noahide interpolations written by other hands.<sup>69</sup> Since the Q source of Matthew's Gospel shows familiarity with the Noahide interpolations (Mt 24:37-39; Lk 17:22-37), the date of the new

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*Emerging Consensus and Beyond*, Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2015; 293-316, and also Israel Knohl, *The Messiah Confrontation: Pharisees versus Sadducees and the Death of Jesus*, Eng. Trans. by David Maisel, Philadelphia PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2022; 73-87, 108.

<sup>66</sup> Except in one point, the conclusion here matches that of J.J. Collins, in *The Scepter and the Star*, 200-201: "It is possible, but not demonstrable, that a Jewish redactor identified Enoch with the Son of Man to counter the Christian identification with Jesus". The argument presented here does indeed 'demonstrate' why the author of chapter 71 must have been addressing a Christianized audience: the subtle allusion to the 'incarnation' of Enoch as 'Son of Man' is proof of the polemical anti-Christian nature of ch. 71, as it would have been blasphemous in any other Jewish context.

<sup>67</sup> In section 3 above, I identified them as Essenes and as the mainstream Essene rivals of the Qumran community in Ben-Daniel, *Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem*, 90-98, 127-131.

<sup>68</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 34.

<sup>69</sup> According to Darell Hannah, most scholars today would agree that the Parables contains interpolations from a Noah apocryphon, although the precise delineation of these interpolations is still debated. Hannah has proposed *1En* 54:7-55:2; 60:1-10,24-25; and 65:1-69:25 as certain, and ch. 64 as likely, cf. Hannah, 'The Book of Noah, the Death of Herod the Great and the Date of the Parables of Enoch', in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, 2007; 473. In a later study, Hannah adds "For now, it will be sufficient to remark that all of this material (42; 54:7-55:2; 60; 65:1-69:25 and 70-71) must be treated with caution. While all of it belongs to the final form of the text, at least the Noahic material is quite disruptive and should not be given the same weight as the rest of the Parables", "*Who is the Son of Man?*", 137.

Enoch corpus would have preceded Matthew's Gospel (c. 70–75 CE). Allowing time for editorial work and copying, and taking account of the disorder caused by the first Jewish Revolt (66-70 CE), it would be reasonable to date this 'new edition' of *1 Enoch* to the decade before the Jewish Revolt, which was indeed a time of heightened tension between traditional Judaism and the Early Church—tension that led to the martyrdom of James, the brother of Jesus and head of the Church, in 62 CE. It would therefore be reasonable to date chapter 71 of the Parables of Enoch to the decade between 55 and 65 CE.<sup>70</sup>

We can go further and speculate on how and why chapter 71 was composed. One plausible suggestion is that when Jesus of Nazareth set out to fulfil the messianic prophecy announced in the Parables of Enoch, he created a split in the Essene movement, between those who accepted him as the Messiah Son of Man and became Christians (cf. Acts 2:41, 6:7), and those who did not. Some of the older members may have remembered Jesus personally from the time he spent with their community at Arbel, during his teens, 40–50 years before.

Quite apart from any religious objections they may have had against Jesus Christ, or against his followers, the non-Christian Essenes would have been outraged at the Church's divisive impact on their community. A re-unifying response was needed and the author of chapter 71 answered this need by composing the extra chapter and inserting it at the end of the Parables of Enoch. By identifying the antediluvian scribe Enoch as the Messiah Son of Man, chapter 71 not only undermined the Christian claim that he was Jesus Christ, but also reclaimed the Parables of Enoch for the non-Christian Essenes.

However, in order to replace Jesus by Enoch, the author of chapter 71 had to explain how Enoch, a mere human being, had assumed the identity of the Messiah Son of Man, whom he had just described as a divine and preexistent individual in the heavenly visions granted to him (*1En* 48:2-3,6, 62:7). As we have seen, he achieved this objective by describing Enoch's 'divinization' in a way that alluded to Jesus Christ's incarnation and imitated, in outline, his ascension and glorification. This ploy is integral to the identification of the final chapter as an ironic reversal: not only is the prophesied eschatological judgment re-contextualized into a past era, that of the great Flood, but so also are the divine events associated with the identification of Jesus as the Messiah Son of Man. The message is supposed to be that the ante-diluvian Enoch, not Jesus, was glorified after his earthly life, and granted those exalted roles and titles.

Simply extending this imitative pattern of ironic reversal, it is possible, though unprovable, that the author also appropriated, from Jesus, the unique wording of Enoch's divinization experience in *1En* 71:14. If this were the case, the words addressed to Enoch by the Almighty, "You are that Son of Man who was born for righteousness..." (*1En* 71:14, cf. 46:3), could indeed be a reflection of the divine words addressed to Jesus, on hearing the messianic prophecy of the Parables. These words of commissioning would have been more suitably addressed to Jesus, than to Enoch or to any non-Christian Jew, for whom the incarnation of the Son of Man would have been a blasphemy (cf. Jn 8:58-59). These words would therefore represent the divine calling received by Jesus, informing him that he was the chosen Messiah Son of Man. This proposal is attractive because it not only explains the strength of Jesus Christ's radical, 'inborn' identification with 'the son of man' in the prophecy of the Parables of Enoch, but also his adoption of this expression as a personal title, 'the Son of Man', as it appears in the Gospels in its translated form (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*). Even though unprovable, this proposal has considerable explanatory power.

It may sound too far-fetched to assume that the divine words addressed to Jesus were remembered and ironically turned against him by the author of chapter 71, until we consider what

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<sup>70</sup> Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 20, 71.

a memorable event it must have been, around 10–15 CE, for the Essene community at Arbel to learn that one of its young guests had experienced a divine calling of this import, directly related to their own messianic prophecy in the Parables of Enoch. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, for the reasons mentioned above, a member of the same Essene community decided to write chapter 71 in order to rally his fellow members around Enoch and prevent their conversion to Christianity. He may have had other reasons for writing this chapter, such as opposition to the way the early Christian Church was developing at that time (c. 55–65 CE),<sup>71</sup> and this was his attempt to impede its progress.

A Christian reaction can be detected in the Gospel of Matthew and in the writings of John. As mentioned above, the author of the Q source in Matthew's Gospel had seen the new edition of *I Enoch* and had interpreted the Flood passages of the Noahide interpolations as an anti-type of the coming judgment of the Son of Man (cf. Mt 24:37-39). Furthermore, from the many references to the coming judgment of the Son of Man in Matthew's Gospel, including two vivid parables, Leslie Walck has documented a degree of affinity with the Parables of Enoch that he describes as "a close and precise parallel between the two works".<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the author's emphatic and repeated depictions of the future coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, in judgment can be understood as a reaction aimed at correcting chapter 71 of the Parables of Enoch—the chapter in which Enoch is suddenly presented as the Messiah Son of Man. After Matthew's Gospel, the challenge appears to have been taken up by John, the longest surviving apostle and spiritual head of the Universal Church at the end of the first century.<sup>73</sup> His response survives in the following ways:

- a) The rarity of references to the Parables of Enoch in the writings of the Church Fathers of the second century and beyond,<sup>74</sup> suggests that the new edition of *I Enoch* was put under an immediate ban by the main manuscript copying centres in the Early Church. Older editions of the other Enoch writings may have continued to circulate, thus accounting for persisting interest in the Book of Watchers. We have suggested elsewhere that John established an influential manuscript copying centre in Ephesus when he arrived there in the 60's CE.<sup>75</sup>
- b) After banning the copying and translating of the Parables of Enoch in its new edition, John replaced it with the Book of Revelation, or Apocalypse, which was the product of the revelation he was granted on the Isle of Patmos (c. 95–96 CE). The affinity between the two

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<sup>71</sup> Essenes were strict observers of the Law and would have been reluctant to admit new converts from paganism without imposing on them every aspect of Jewish Law. Those on the periphery of the Christian movement may even have wanted to separate themselves entirely from the Church, because of the entry of unobservant, uncircumcised, ritually impure pagans.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Leslie W. Walck, "The judicial role of the Son of Man is also a prominent feature of Matthew's portrayal. It appears in Mt. 13:36-43, as the Son of Man consigns the wicked to a fiery fate. The role is also apparent in Mt. 16:27 in which the Son of Man will repay persons for what they have done, and in Mt. 19:28 in the image of sitting upon the glorious throne. In the apocalyptic material in Mt. 24:30, the morning of the tribes of the earth entails the judicial aspect of the coming of the Son of Man, and in Mt 25:31 the content of the parable is explicitly judicial. These judicial features are clear in Matthew's portrayal of the Son of Man, and as compared to the other synoptic Gospels, they appear to be a deliberate shaping by the author of the concept of the Son of Man in this direction. The judicial role of the Son of Man, then, is a close and precise parallel between the two works...", *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew*, 231.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ben-Daniel, *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem*, 121-170, 'The Rise and Fall of the Parables of Enoch: John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth and John of Patmos'.

<sup>74</sup> In his chapter in 'The Parables of Enoch in Early Christianity' (*Paradigm Shift*, 361), Lee Martin McDonald lists only 6 parallels with the Parables of Enoch in ecclesial writings up to the fifth century CE: three from the second century and one from each of the three succeeding centuries (from the Apocalypse of Peter, Odes of Solomon, Book of Adam and Eve, and in the writings of Athenagorus, Origen and Lactantius).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. John and Gloria Ben-Daniel, *Saint John and the Book of Revelation: From Essenes to End-Times*, Jerusalem: Beit Yochanan, 82-88.

works is striking, indicating that John had been previously exposed to the Parables of Enoch. As the ‘Revelation of Jesus Christ’ (Rev 1:1), John’s Apocalypse completes the Son of Man’s task to reveal “all the treasures of what is hidden” (*1En* 46:3; cf. Jn 16:12-15).

- c) John ensured the use of the title ‘the Son of Man’ was restricted to the reported speech of Jesus alone, and promoted the use of other divine titles to refer to him. This is particularly evident in the Book of Revelation, where the Danielic ‘one like a son of man’ has completely replaced the Gospels’ ‘Son of Man’ (Rev 1:13, 14:14). In this way, the main connection between the ministry of Jesus, Son of Man, and the new edition of the Parables of Enoch in *1 Enoch* was disrupted.
- d) Finally, in his Gospel, John reaffirms that Jesus Christ fulfils the roles ascribed to the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch, in tacit opposition to the claims made for Enoch (e.g., Jn 1:18, 3:13, 5:22–23, 27, 6:62, 16:12–15).

As a result of these measures, the edition of *1 Enoch* containing the redacted form of the Parables rapidly disappeared from circulation in the Early Church. Nevertheless, it appears to have been translated into Greek at an early date and continued to be of interest to Gnostics and heterodox groups in Egypt and North Africa.<sup>76</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Ethiopic Church obtained a copy in Egypt and translated it into Ge’ez, in which language it has been copied and preserved up to the present day, as part of the biblical canon of the Ethiopian Church. The Parables of Enoch did not survive in any other textual tradition, resulting in the loss of this important Christological key until its rediscovery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>77</sup> Under these new conditions, even chapter 71, which was written to refute the Church’s proclamations, turns out to be a reluctant and somewhat contrary witness, an ‘anti-witness’, to the incarnation, ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ.

## 10. Summary and Conclusions

The discovery of the ruins of an ancient Essene settlement at the Arbel cave village, of the same size as Qumran and established at the same time, contributes significantly to the portrait of the historical Jesus emerging from biblical research, especially to his so-called ‘missing years’. Since ancient times, Arbel has been associated with the start of divine redemption and so it is no coincidence that the messianic prophecy expressed in the Parables of Enoch (*1En* 37–71), composed around the turn of the first millennium CE, can also be traced to the Arbel cave village. Owing to the proximity of the Arbel cave village to Nazareth and the well documented hospitality of the Essenes for approved male adolescents, it is entirely plausible that Jesus of Nazareth was received as a guest during his late teens. A prolonged encounter of this kind would explain Jesus’ familiarity with the Essene apocalyptic worldview, discipline and biblical interpretation. It would

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<sup>76</sup> In *De Cultu Feminarum*, 1.3, written in Carthage, North Africa, c. 200 CE, Tertullian refers specifically to the Parables of Enoch, which implies that he was in possession of a copy of *1 Enoch* that included it. In the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, Augustine of Hippo had to discourage the study of *1 Enoch*, and justify its extra canonical status, perhaps due to its popularity in that part of North Africa (*City of God*, XV.23; XVIII.38).

<sup>77</sup> Several modern scholars have extolled the Parables of Enoch for its significance in understanding the principal elements of Christology, which in turn helps to bridge the gap between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of Faith. For example, Joel Marcus quips “With apologies to Voltaire, we may say that if the Enochic Son of Man had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him to explain the Son of Man sayings in the Gospel” (*Mark 1–8: A New Testament Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27, New York: Doubleday, 2000; 530). Similarly, Crispin Fletcher-Louis writes that the Enochic Son of Man is “of inestimable significance for the understanding of both the *origins* and the *shape* of “Christological monotheism”. On the matter of origins, it offers an obvious and straight-forward explanation of Christ devotion: the earliest Jewish believers worshipped Jesus because they believed he truly was, as he had claimed to be, the (preexistent) Son of Man they had been waiting for” (*Jesus Monotheism*, 180). The quotations of both these authors are taken from Charles Giesen’s ‘The Importance of the Parables of *1 Enoch* for Understanding the Son of Man in the Four Gospels’, *Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism*, Leiden: Brill, 2020; 64-65 and 55 respectively.

also explain his selection of the nearby lakeside area for the start of his public ministry and the evident influence of the Parables of Enoch on his messianic awareness and mission. The evidence points to Jesus identifying with the messianic figure in the Parables of Enoch and fulfilling its messianic prophecy in a way that explains the exalted Christology of the Early Church and bridges the gap between the historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith.

The question of how Jesus was made aware of his messianic mission was raised after discovering that the final chapter of the Parables of Enoch (chapter 71) was a later addition modelled on the ascension and glorification of Jesus and then applied retrospectively to Enoch in the form of an 'ironic reversal', or 'anti-witness'. Applying this insight more broadly, we propose that the wording of Enoch's divine vocation in *1 Enoch* 71:14 may indeed reflect the wording of the divine calling originally addressed to Jesus. This would explain Jesus' radical identification with 'the son of man' in the Parables of Enoch, his modification of that expression to the title 'the Son of Man', and his personal adoption of this title as his preferred messianic designation, as reported in the Gospels.