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### *The Son of Man Debate and its Relevance for Orthodox Theology*

#### *1. Introduction*

From the very beginnings of biblical criticism, the challenges of scholarly quest for the meaning of the Christological title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, so to speak, has been followed by the shadow of a complex debate. The fact that the theological language of Orthodoxy did not create a coinage that would match the German *die Menschensohnfrage* or the English one *The Son of Man problem* may be explained by the orientation of the young Orthodox biblical scholarship to which the scopes of the Western tradition were not interesting at times, especially if it touched on them burdened with its own question of survival. However, if anyone from Eastern Orthodox Church today was to touch on these challenges, they would inevitably be faced with the following two questions: 1) why did contemporary exegesis develop a debate over this, and not some other titles (e.g. ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ χριστός, ὁ μεσσίας), but also 2) what would make this debate relevant for Orthodox theology? Given that the objective of the proposed text is to answer these questions, but not to accept the aforementioned challenges, let us begin by considering the basic assumptions of the debate.

#### *2. The Son of Man Debate*

Before outlining the basic hermeneutic framework of the debate, it is necessary to bring to mind the instances where the New Testament writings refer to the Son of Man figure. Synoptic sayings are commonly divided into three kinds: 1) the first relies on the Septuagint text of Daniel's vision of eschatological judgment in which ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου (MT: כְּבֶר אִנּוֹשׁ) almost equally participates with the Ancient of Days (Dn 7:9-14), and with that picture it brings the description of the Parousia (Mk 14:62par); 2) the second kind rests on the Deutero-Isaian tradition of the Suffering Servant (Is 40-66) and the events of cross and resurrection were interpreted by the sayings of this group (Mk 8:31par), and 3) the third kind comprises fewer sayings concerning the characteristics of the earthly Son of Man: his authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:10), that he has nowhere to lay his head (Mt 8:20) or even refer to his eating and drinking (Lk 7:34). In comparison to the first three, the Fourth Gospel describes the Son of Man differently, whose vertical (καταβαίνειν/ἀναβαίνειν) motif (1:51; 3:13; 6:62) contrasts the apocalyptic (ἐρχόμενος ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν) tradition and horizontal (παθεῖν/ἀνίστημι) concept of the Synoptic Gospels, and whose uniqueness is the subject of extensive discussions.

Although this division can be more widely discussed, it is a fact that to all the Son of Man sayings two common denominators apply. Firstly, since the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου

expression primarily occurs *im Munde des Herrn*<sup>1</sup>, it is thought to be crucial in the Christological map of the early Christian conceptual world, and secondly, since that self-identification does not raise any further questions, which is not the case with the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (cf. Mt 4:3), that expression is considered to be *self-understood* among the first readers of the New Testament books. Based on those two facts – that, therefore, only Jesus calls himself the Son of Man, as well as that this self-identification is understandable in itself, in the atmosphere of the Enlightenment’s appreciation of reason as the primary epistemological organ, a particular interest was born for the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου expression as the one containing the key to Jesus’ self-understanding more or less different than, if not opposed to, that level of understanding Christ’s person that the church tradition nurtures<sup>2</sup>. However, the quest for exposing that exact self-understanding is methodologically problematic at the root, because in such an effort the reason *a priori* writes its own views of the New Testament Christology and anthropology in the requested space of the concept content. In other words, such interpretations are pre-destined to be a labyrinth of researcher’s own understanding of Jesus’ understanding, and so the “Son of Man” problem exists which is *a priori* unsolvable due to the abundance of various research and ecclesiastic milieu<sup>3</sup>.

If the objective of the proposed work requested only a rough draft of the causes of the debate, then we would have put a full stop here, or maybe an ellipsis, but for the purpose of providing detailed information about its courses, as well as for the issues concerning the relevance of the discussion in the Orthodox environment, it will be necessary to place a colon after all: let us consider, then, in chronological order, the basic thoughts about the Son of Man, starting from the patristic period<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jn 12:34; Acts 7:56. The expression originates from German theologians: e. g. H. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn: ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Freiburg i. B.: Mohr 1896, 22, 30 etc, or see the recent study (passim): M. Kreplin, *Das Selbstverständnis Jesu: hermeneutische und christologische Reflexion; historisch-kritische Analyse*, WUNT 2.141, Tübingen: Mohr 2001.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, a German Protestant theologian and significant representative of biblical criticism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832-1910) states the reason for the interest in this subject in his work “Ueber den NTlichen Ausdruck ‘Menschensohn’”, ZWT 8 (1865), 212-237, by writing the following (213): “Nichts kann gewisser sein, als dass er [=Jesus; VT] ihn [=den Ausdruck ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; VT] als den treffendsten, wo es galt, das Eigenthümliche seines persönlichen Wesens, das Characteristische seines Auftretens und Berufs zu bezeichnen, selbst gewählt hat. Darin liegt das ganze Gewicht des Namens.”

<sup>3</sup> Although A. Schweitzer (1875-1965) in his capital work *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr 1906; 1984) concluded (p. 290): “Im großen und ganzen ist die Menschensohnfrage also historisch lösbar und gelöst”, his conviction was not objective. In the late sixties, A. J. B. Higgins published a significant text entitled: “Is the Son of Man Problem Insoluble?” – in: E. E. Ellis, M. Wilcox (eds.), *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1969, 70-87, and so did M. D. Hooker an often quoted work: “Is the Son of Man problem really insoluble?” – in: E. Best – R. McL. Wilson (eds.), *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament presented to M. Black*, CUP 1979, 155-168. Finding that the problem was insoluble did not, however, mean capitulation, and so a recent study by Maurice Casey is entitled: *The Solution to the Son of Man Problem* (London – New York: T & T Clark 2007, 2009). But also see: P. L. Owen, “Problems with Casey’s ‘Solution’”, in: L. W. Hurtado – P. L. Owen (eds.), *Who Is This Son of Man? The Latest Scholarship on a Puzzling Expression of the Historical Jesus*, London: T & T Clark 2011, 28-49.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to observe that reporting about the history of the problem gained scientific relevance, although it did not contribute to achieving consensus, because the answer to the demanding data processing and thus the need for (dis)agreement in the debate development has not been passed by its own solutions. First scientific reviews appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and most often in the interpretations of the first occurrence of the expression (Mt 8:20) in the canonical order of the New Testament books: e. g. J. C. Wolf, *Curae philologicae et criticae in IV. ss. evangelia et actus apostolicos*, Hamburg 1725; J. C. Köcher, *Analecta philologica et ex-*

## 2.1. Patristic period

Although contemporary debate does not devote more attention to the patristic interpretation of the “Son of Man” expression, this does not mean that an overtone of some problem did not follow that expression. In the spirit of the Greek language, it all began with the genealogical interpretation: reading Dn 7:13 as an eschatological prophecy<sup>5</sup>, Justin understood the genitive “(τοῦ) ἀνθρώπου” according to the grammatical rule of his mother tongue, as a proof, therefore, of Jesus’ true origin from the earthly parent, Mary or Abraham (Adam)<sup>6</sup>. That such explanation prevailed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, witness the early gnostic writers<sup>7</sup>, according to whom Jesus is the Son of the Man because he is descendent = son of the gnostic God Anthropos (ἀπόγονον Ανθρώπου)<sup>8</sup>. Following, however, the Pauline typology according to which Christ is the New Adam<sup>9</sup>, Irenaeus writes that “the Son of God became the Son of man, that man... might become the son of God”<sup>10</sup>, and the genitive which the Gnostics misinterpreted, he uses as a mighty antidocetic argument for Christ’s true birth from Virgin Mary, without whom the salvation is not possible<sup>11</sup>. In this way, understood as the proof of Christ’s human nature, the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου title entered the scope of Christological polemics.

Despite the fact that the genealogical readings laid the foundations for the patristic understanding of this title, it is interesting that with the most prominent “genealogists” (Justin, Irenaeus), and also with Ignatius of Antioch<sup>12</sup>, there is clear departure from the

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*egetica in quatuor ss. evangelia*, Altenburg: Richter 1766. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch humanist Wessel Scholten (1785-1856) published the first major monograph on the subject, giving a comprehensive overview starting from the patristic period: *Specimen hermeneutico-theologicum: De appellatione τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, qua Jesus se Messiam professus est*, Trajecti ad Rhenum: Paddenburg & Schoonhoven 1809, 141-209, and at the end of that same century German Biblist Heinrich Appel (born 1867) published a shorter report: *Die Selbstbezeichnung Jesu: Der Sohn des Menschen*, Stavenhagen: Beholtz 1896, 1-27. Undoubtedly, as the science progressed the reviews became shorter and limited to newer works, and so in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were published in scientific journals: M. Black, “The Son of Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate”, BJRL 45 (1962-63), 305-318, and relevant dictionaries: C. Colpe, “ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου”, TWNT VIII (1969), 403-81 = TDNT VIII (1972), 400-77; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Son of Man”, ABD VI, 137-50. Only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the reviews take the form of monographic studies, of which we point out to the following two (on which the proposed work relies): D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, NTS Monograph Series 107, CUP 1999; M. Müller, *The Expression ‘Son of Man’ and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation*, London: Equinox Pub 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Dialogus 31 (PG 6.540B-541D): “Ὡς υἱὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐπάνω νεφελῶν ἐλεύσεται, ὡς Δαυὶδ ἐμήνυσεν.”

<sup>6</sup> Dialogus 100 (PG 6.709B-C): “Υἱὸν οὖν ἀνθρώπου ἑαυτὸν ἔλεγεν, ἥτοι ἀπὸ τῆς γεννήσεως τῆς διὰ παρθένου, ἥτις ἦν, ὡς ἔφην, ἀπὸ τοῦ Δαυεὶδ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἀβραάμ [Ἀδάμ] γένους, ἡ διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν τὸν Ἀβραάμ [Ἀδάμ] πατέρα καὶ τούτων τῶν κατηριθμημένων, ἐξ ὧν κατάγει ἡ Μαρία τὸ γένος.”

<sup>7</sup> See: F. H. Borsch, *The Christian and the Gnostic Son of Man*, London: SCM Press 1970, 58-121.

<sup>8</sup> Adv. haer. 1.12:4 (PG 7a.575B).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rom 5:12-21; 1 Kor 15:21-22.45-49.

<sup>10</sup> Adv. haer. 3.19:1 (ANF 1.449; PG 7a.939B): “Εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ Λόγος ἄνθρωπος καὶ Υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα ὁ ἄνθρωπος χωρήσας τὸν Λόγον καὶ τὴν υἰοθεσίαν λαβὼν γένηται υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ.”

<sup>11</sup> Adv. haer. 3.22:1 (PG 7a.955C-956A-C).

<sup>12</sup> As early as at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Ignatius wrote to the Ephesians about common gathering “ἐν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ τῷ κατὰ σάρκα ἐκ γένους Δαυεὶδ τῷ υἱῷ ἀνθρώπου καὶ υἱῷ θεοῦ” (20:2, PG 5.661A). It appears that this parallel writing of the two Christological expressions represents an improvement in comparison to the New Testament books (cf. Rom 1:3-4), as if it anticipated the Chalcedonian dogma about two natures in the person of Christ, but it is not impossible to understand this place as a later interpolation of the copyists. Georgian Orthodox theologian and historian Grigol Peradze (1899-1942) showed that the Georgian translation of Didache, originating from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, “birgt die Spuren der Kämpfe für die Orthodoxie

New Testament's definite in favour of the indefinite form<sup>13</sup>. This departure, which is not common in the writing of the [ὁ] υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ title, is explained by the desire of the Fathers to better mark the wholeness of Christ's human nature with the indefiniteness, and maybe even by need for a more closer harmony of the New Testament text with the prophetic description of the ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου figure (Dn 7:13; cf. Mk 14:62par). However, there is one more reason which reflects the ecumenical unity in the understanding of this expression: language of the Latin Fathers, in whose works the construction *filius hominis* also becomes a part of the debate on the authenticity of Christ's human nature<sup>14</sup>, does not use articles, which is why *filius hominis* could at the same time function as a Christological title as well as an expression of human nature. In other words, υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου and *filius hominis* eventually become equal expressions, which is evident from the Chalcedonian Tome<sup>15</sup>, and such an understanding continued during the Middle Ages<sup>16</sup>. In that sense, this expression, whose Semitic basis the Greek and Latin theologians could not notice due to the cultural distance from the mentality of the Middle East<sup>17</sup>, was indirectly a part of some kind of debate, though certainly essentially different from the one which will ensue in the modern period.

## 2.2. Modern period

Starting from the 15th century, the research of the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου expression took a different course compared to the patristic period and this change should be regarded

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und das Chalcedonense" – see: "Die »Lehre der zwölf Apostel« in der georgischen Überlieferung", ZNW 31 (1932), 111-116:115; instead of the original (16:8): "Τότε ὄψεται ὁ κόσμος τὸν κύριον ἐρχόμενον ἐπάνω τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ" (BEΠΕΣ 2.220), the extended Georgian translation says: "Dann wird diese Welt unsern Herrn Jesus Christus, den Sohn des Menschen, der (gleichzeitig) Sohn Gottes ist, sehen (als) kommend auf den Wolken mit der Macht und großer Herrlichkeit..." (p. 116). In the same way, Greek copyists of the Ignatius' epistles probably affected the text, introducing in it the spirit of the theological norms of their time, although one should bear in mind that the relevant place in the epistle to the Ephesians which belongs to the corpus *Epistole interpolate* makes no mention of the Son of Man expression (PG 5.753B-756A).

<sup>13</sup> See notes: 5.6.10.

<sup>14</sup> The essence of Tertullian's discussions with the Gnostics and Marcion can be expressed in one sentence which mentions *filius hominis*: "Certe cum et ipse se filium hominis praedicaret, natum scilicet profitebatur" (Adv. Marc. 3.1:1, PL 2.335C), and it is possible that the first (known) confession of faith that includes that expression can be recognized with this Latin orator: "[H]unc missum a Patre in virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et Deum, filium hominis et filium Dei, et cognominatum Jesum Christum" (Adv. prax. 2, PL 2.157A). Cyprian follows that course: "[Q]uod conservandis ac vivificandis nobis Pater Filium misit, ut reparare nos posset, quodque Filius missus esse et hominis filius fieri voluit ut nos Dei filios faceret" (De op. et el. 1, PL 4.601D-603A), and so does Augustine: "Unicus enim natura Dei Filius, propter nos misericordia factus est filius hominis, ut nos natura filii hominis, filii Dei per illum gratia fieremus" (De civ. dei 21:15, PL 41.729).

<sup>15</sup> A few words of Pope Leo the Great, written in his Tome, conclude the entire patristic interpretation of the studied expression: "Unus enim idemque est, quod saepe dicendum est, vere Dei Filius, et vere Hominis Filius. Deus per id quod in principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum; homo per id quod Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis. Deus per id quod omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil; homo per id quod factus est ex muliere, factus sub lege. Nativitas carnis manifestatio est humanae naturae; partus virginis, divinae est virtutis indicium" (PL 54.767B-C).

<sup>16</sup> Let us take John of Damascus here as the main representative, according to whom the Son is called "ἐξ ἑνὸς τῶν μερῶν θεὸν μόνον καὶ υἱὸν θεοῦ καὶ ἄνθρωπον μόνον καὶ υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου" (Exp. fidei 48; PG 94.997B-C).

<sup>17</sup> Casey showed that the Syriac Fathers, despite their knowledge of the Semitic basis of the expression, read this same expression in a titular way: their translations of the Greek title into the Syriac language were not turn back to the Aramaic basis of idiomatic meaning (ܐܘܢܝܘܢܐ) בר, but created completely new titles; see: Casey, *Solution*, 7-10.

in the light of a number of social, cultural, religious and anthropological changes which the Renaissance humanism brought. Owing to the advancement of Semitic studies and archeological researches during the 16th and 17th centuries, it was concluded that Jesus spoke the Aramaic language, and so the Semitic idioms that are hiding in the basis of the Greek expression were singled out: Aramaic (א)נש(א) בר and/or Hebrew בן אדם<sup>18</sup>. Still, modern scholarship did not remain on that and the explanation for this unconstrainability should be sought in the Protestant rejection of the authority of tradition. Similarly to the complex relation between historical Jesus and Christ of faith<sup>19</sup>, the German universities of the 19th century produced different concepts of the Son of Man: from the ideal man (Idealmensch)<sup>20</sup> to the humbled one, but not so much in a kenotic sense, as in the sense of the conscious rejection of authority that emanates from his messianic figure, and that was so important to the Church:

„Menschensohn, also nicht Gottessohn, wollte er sein... Im Gegensatz gegen einen mit irdischer Macht und Herrlichkeit zur Aufrichtung eines Reichs irdischen Glaubens und weltlicher Herrschaft erscheinenden Messias wollte er nur Mensch sein in dem einfachen, anspruchlosen, schlechthin zum Begriff eines menschlichen Subjects gehörenden Sinn; Mensch im ächtesten und weitesten Sinn als ein solcher, der nichts von sich fern hält und sich fremd erachtet.“<sup>21</sup>

The question arises: in what way, then, did the Gospels, and the Church in general, turn this “quite simple man” = son of man, into a Messiah = the Son of Man? There are two distinctive directions of answering to this question in modern scholarship, the first of which is called:

### 2.2.1. Apocalyptic or messianic interpretation

The core of the subtitled interpretation is an attempt to explain the New Testament Son of Man using an apocalyptic tradition of Judaism in the centre of which is a pre-existent, heavenly and antropomorphic figure with whom Jesus of Nazareth is identified, by his own or somebody else’s decision. Such a theory, according to which the *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* expression should be understood as a messianic title, also contains a very stable fact: the New Testament announcements of Parousia (e. g. Mk 14:62par) reflect Daniel’s vision (7:13), which is also accepted by the patristic exegesis (Justin). However, we should note a significant difference between the patristic reading of Dn 7:13 as a *prophecy* about Parousia and modern understanding according to which Jesus is *identified* with the central figure of the religious idea which exists beyond him and which is potentially verifiable. All of the complexity of this difference could be discerned from the very tur-

<sup>18</sup> See: P. M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel* Casey, SNTS.MS 102, CUP 1998, 76-79, 83-88; idem, *An Aramaic Approach to Q: Sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, SNTS.MS 122, CUP 2002, 53-56.

<sup>19</sup> On reception of the quest for historical Jesus in the Serbian theological thought see: V. Tatalović, “Osvrt na problematiku istorijskog Isusa u srpskoj teološkoj sredini: deo prvi”, ST 7 (2010), 1-11; “Osvrt na problematiku istorijskog Isusa u srpskoj teološkoj sredini: deo drugi”, ST 8 (2010), 9-18.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. e. g. a note of J. L. S. Lutz: “...daß dieser Ausdruck bezeichnet die Idee, das Urbild, den Repräsentanten der Menschheit” (*Biblische Dogmatik*, Pforzheim: Flammer 1861, 291), or a remark of C. E. Luthardt: “Aber er unterscheidet sich dabei von den andern Menschen dadurch, daß er sich den Menschensohn nennt. Also die rechte Frucht des Menschengeschlechts ist er, in welchem die Geschichte zu ihrem Abschluß gekommen ist, welche mit dem ersten Menschen begonnen” (*Das johanneische Evangelium nach seiner Eigentümlichkeit geschildert und erklärt*, 2 Bde, Nürnberg: Geiger 1852-1853, 1.350).

<sup>21</sup> F. Ch. Baur, “Die Bedeutung des Ausdrucks: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου”, ZWT 3 (1860): 274-292:280.



bulent reactions that ensued the discovery of the manuscripts of 1 Enoch in Abyssinia (1733)<sup>22</sup>, and which today we usually divide into three groups:

1) At first it was established that the Book of Parables (1 Enoch 37-71) contains the indications of the Judaic concept of a pre-existent heavenly figure<sup>23</sup>, to whom the Son of Man is very close<sup>24</sup>, and since the whole Book of Enoch dates back to the pre-Christian times, as R. H. Charles (1855–1931)<sup>25</sup> elaborated in the late 19th century, it was concluded that the Book of Enoch should be regarded as a phase in the development of the apocalyptic concept<sup>26</sup> which should be placed between Daniel's and the New Testament eras. Thus the scholarship gained a solid ground for the division between Jesus and Christ: if not Jesus himself, then it was the Church that identified a humbled and despised son of man (Jesus) with the central figure of that apocalyptic tradition, making him the Son of Man (Christ), which is supported by the fact that Jesus always speaks of (himself as) the Son of Man in the third person singular<sup>27</sup>.

2) This long irrefutable thesis was shaken after all in the mid-twentieth century. When among the fragments of 1 Enoch amidst the newly discovered Qumran scrolls (1949) the Book of Parables<sup>28</sup> was not listed, Charles' theory of its pre-Christian origin

<sup>22</sup> The first translation of the Book of Enoch (into English) appeared in 1821 and it was published by Archbishop of Cashel and Oxford Hebraist Richard Laurence (1760–1838): *The Book of Enoch the Prophet*, Oxford: Parker 1821, 31838.

<sup>23</sup> Laurence pointed out to two sections: 1 Enoch 48:3-5 and 61:8-13, by writing (p. lii): "In both these passages the preexistence of the Messiah is asserted in language which admits not the slightest shade of ambiguity."

<sup>24</sup> First thesis: H. Ewald, *Commentarius in apocalypsin Johannis, exegeticus et criticus*, Leipzig: Hahn 1828.

<sup>25</sup> R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1912, p. 10: "There is... some diversity of opinion as to the date of the book among leading authorities. That it is, as a whole, pre-Christian, may be regarded as definitely established."

<sup>26</sup> According to Charles (*Enoch*, 86f), there are three Coptic syntagms that should be considered equivalent to this expression: *walda sab 'e* (46:2.3.4; 48:2; 60:10); *walda be 'esi* (62:5; 69:29[2x]; 71:14); *walda 'eguala 'emmaheaiaw* (62:7.9.14; 63:11; 69:26.27; 70:1; 71:17).

<sup>27</sup> E. g. Mt 8:20; Lk 12:8 etc. The absurdity of such wording in the Greek language was first noticed by William Wrede (1859-1906) and he wrote in his work "Zum Thema 'Menschensohn'", ZNW 5 (1904), 359-360:360: "Vermutlich hätten doch auch die Übersetzer der aramäischen Worte Jesu soviel Aramäisch gekonnt, um eine solche Gewohnheit zu kennen und im Griechischen das korrekte Ich einzusetzen." According to D. Strauß-a (1808-1874), with this manner, Jesus showed the later way of *self-understanding* (*Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 Bde, Tübingen 1835-1836, 1.576): "[W]enn er vom Menschensohn in der dritten Person gesprochen hat, so wollte er diesen damals noch nicht als identisch mit ihm selbst bezeichnen." This idea was taken over and further developed by Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), who presented a thesis about the coming of the Son of Man as another Messiah, different from the one who dies and resurrects (*Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen: Mohr [1948] 1984, 31): "Es ist deutlich: die Weissagungen der Parusie die von Tod und Auferstehung haben ursprünglich nichts miteinander zu tun, d. h. in den Worten, die vom Kommen des 'Menschensohnes' reden, ist gar nicht daran gedacht, daß dieser 'Menschensohn' in Person schon da ist und erst durch den Tod entfernt werden muß, um dann vom Himmel wieder kommen zu können." A more logical explanation was offered by Wilhelm Bousset (1865-1920), to whom this phenomenon is understandable solely if in it we recognize the speech of the community = Church (*Kyrios Christos*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1913, 111). However, none of these nor similar theories became some kind of permanent solution, considering the additional problems of the originality of sayings and all the combinatorics of sources; for further reading on this, see: Burkett, *Debate*, 57-67.

<sup>28</sup> The publisher of the Book of Enoch found in Qumran was a Polish expert on the Dead Sea scrolls Józef Tadeusz Milik (1922-2006) who concluded that the Book of Parables was written in Greek around 270 AD, and also that its character of the Son of Man was inspired by the New Testament character: "Problèmes de la littérature henochique à la lumière des fragments araméens de Qumrân", HTR 64 (1971): 333-378. The Greek exegete Σάββας Ἀγουρίδης (1921-2009) was loyal to that attitude: S. Agourides, "The Son of Man in Enoch", ΔΒΜ 6 (1973), 130-147.

ceased to be valid, hence he began to doubt the interdevelopmental character of the Enochic Son of Man and, with it, any “Son of Man” concept of Judaism. Therefore, in the early seventies of the last century, a Norwegian exegete R. Livestad (1916-2002) published, as it turned out, a very influential work that sounded the (temporary) end of this interpretation: “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man”<sup>29</sup>. The central message of this study, by whose title later were named the chapters in literature, is that the origin of the New Testament Son of Man should be sought in the theological milieu of the earliest Church, and not in the apocalyptic traditions of Judaism.

3) It is agreeable, however, how much can truly be said about the official end of this theory<sup>30</sup>. Three decades ago, a British researcher A. J. B. Higgins began his significant study with the sentence: “A majority of recent written continue to support the view that there existed in pre-Christian apocalyptic Judaism a concept of the eschatological Son of man...”<sup>31</sup>, which pleases the Orthodox appreciation of tradition – and this course is followed by a current professor of the Old Testament at the Orthodox Theology Faculty in Belgrade – Rodoljub Kubat<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, a few years ago, a study was completed in Britain and published in Germany which proves the thesis by which even the Son of Man from the Gospel of John is based on the apocalyptic sources from which not even 1 Enoch was excluded<sup>33</sup>.

Finally, the change of interest in the apocalyptic approach should also be viewed through the prism (of strengthening) of the second line of interpretation, in scholarship known as:

### 2.2.2. Idiomatic or nontitular interpretation

A decisive contribution to the subtitled line of interpretation was given already by the first humanists<sup>34</sup>, but in the sixties of the last century, owing to the contribution of Géza

<sup>29</sup> R. S. Livestad, “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man”, NTS 18 (1971-1972), 243-267 = “Der apokalyptische Menschensohn ein theologisches Phantom”, ASTI 6 (1967-1968), 49-109.

<sup>30</sup> Already in the '70s of the last century, though it appeared at the beginning of the decade, Milik's theory was subjected to harsh criticism, especially by the SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminar-a in Tübingen (1977) and Paris (1978). According to the consensus of the members of this scientific institution, 1 Enoch 37-71 belongs to a Judaic author after all, and it was written during the first century of the CE. Milik, actually, made a mistake in that he did not directly use the Ethiopian manuscripts – which, as a matter of fact, store the text of the Book of Parables, but he took Charles' date and the translation of that Book “for granted”, whence his unsubstantiated assumptions originated. See: J. H. Charlesworth, “The SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminars at Tübingen and Paris on *the Books of Enoch* (Seminar Report)”, NTS 25 (1979), 315-323; M. A. Knibb, “The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review”, NTS 25 (1979), 345-359; C. L. Mearns, “Dating the Similitudes of Enoch”, NTS 25 (1979), 360-369.

<sup>31</sup> A. J. B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus*, SNTS.MS 39, CUP 1980, 3.

<sup>32</sup> R. S. Kubat, *Tragovima Pisma. Stari Savez – teologija i hermeneutika*, Kragujevac: Kalenić 2012, 56.95.103.111.118.252.277.

<sup>33</sup> B. E. Reynolds, *Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.249, Tübingen: Mohr 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Commenting on Mt 12:8, the Dutch humanist Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) wrote that “errant qui uñon τοῦ ἀνθρώπου [filium hominis] hoc loco Christum peculiariter intelligunt”, adding that “notissimum est Hebraeis  $\text{בן אדם}$  [filium hominis] hominem quemvis significare...” (*Annotationes in libros evangeliorum*, Amsterdam – Paris 1641, ad loc). Such, nontitular interpretation which pointed to some kind of error with respect to the writing and understanding of the Greek ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου expression, with otherwise rare representatives, is noticeable during the later centuries, as well. In his commentary to Mt 8:20, Heinrich E. G. Paulus (1761-1851) notes that the member of the ancient people of the Middle East deliberately avoids speaking in first, but rather addresses himself in third person, and so son of man means: “Ich, ohne alle Emphase, dieser Mensch, d.h. der, den Du vor Dir siehst” (*Philologisch-kritischer und historischer Commentar über das Neue Testament I. Der drey ersten Evangelien erster Hälfte*, Lübeck: Bohn 1804, 470).

Vermes (1924-2013), it gained in importance. Unlike his predecessors, Vermes examined a wider range of the Aramaic source and showed that the רב (א)שנ(א) expression in Christ's time could have not only general meanings: "man", "somebody" or "everybody", but that it also could function as a personal pronoun of the first person singular<sup>35</sup>: it was this exact function that the early Church *misinterpreted*, and so it translated the Aramaic idiom which Jesus commonly used into the Christological title derived from Dn 7:13. And although this attempt shed light on the problem from a completely new perspective, there was no solution: in what way, indeed, and why, does one quite ordinary Aramaic "I" become the Christological title of the definite form?

Maurice Casey (1942-), whose recent study with a courageous title also promises the solution: "The Solution to the Son of Man Problem" (see note 3), worked very hard on further elaboration of this theory. Similarly to Vermes, Casey also finds that the Aramaic construction בר (א)נש(א) refers to the speaker, a man in general, and that Jesus' use of the phrase did not have a titular meaning. In fact, neither Dn 7:13, 1 Enoch, nor 4 Esra (13) could be the witnesses of the apocalyptic or messianic interpretation, i.e. the "Son of Man" tradition in Judaism: faith in such a concept is an enormous mistake of moderns scholarship (p. 315) which should be ignored while focusing on the Aramaic reconstruction of the New Testament Greek text. Thus, if this particular expression, after converting it back to the Aramaic language, had the general meaning of "man"<sup>36</sup>, or a specific idiomatic function that could stand in the place of personal pronoun "I"<sup>37</sup>, that would mean that it is authentic<sup>38</sup>; otherwise, it should be thought of as the redactional work of the Evangelists/Church. Although such move, supported by an extremely thorough analysis, represents a serious attempt to correct Vermes' inability to answer to the above-stated inconsistency, the fact is that Casey's reconstructions are still based only on the Greek text, and are therefore extremely speculative. For, even if the Aramaic בר (א)נש(א) expression did not have an adequate parallel in the Greek language, which im-

<sup>35</sup> At the beginning of his analysis one finds the chapter Genesis Rabbah VII 2: "Jacob of Kefar Nibburayya gave a ruling in Tyre that fish should be ritually slaughtered. Hearing this, R. Haggai sent him this order: Come and be scourged! He replied, Should בר נש be scourged who proclaims the word of Scripture?" In his commentary to this midrash, Vermes offered the principle of his theory: "Theoretically... bar nāsh may be rendered here as 'one', but the context hardly suggests that at this particular juncture Jacob intends to voice a general principle. Hurt by his opponent's harsh words, he clearly seems to be referring to himself and the indirect idiom is no doubt due to the implied humiliation" – G. Vermes, "Appendix E: The Use of בר נש / בר נשא in Jewish Aramaic", in: M. Black (ed.), *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1967, 310-330:321; also see: idem, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, London: Collins 1973, 163ff, 188ff.

<sup>36</sup> Casey (*Solution*, 61-67) states nineteen proofs for this meaning, and draws the following conclusion (p. 67): "In general, therefore, בר (א)נש(א) was a general term for humankind. It could be used for everyone in general, or for a more restricted group of people. It could be used in the singular of a single individual person, whether anonymous, generic or specific. This forms the cultural background for the particular idiom... , whereby a speaker might use a general statement containing the term בר (א)נש(א) to say something about himself, or himself and others, or about whoever was clearly from the context, particularly in mind."

<sup>37</sup> Starting from the inscriptions on the third Sefire stele (Sefire, III 16), Casey finds over thirty Aramaic testimonies from the territory of the ancient Palestine, mainly Galilee, in which בר (א)נש(א) relates to the speaker, or a group of people including the speaker, or, ultimately, to someone else whose identity is obvious from the context (*Solution*, 67-81).

<sup>38</sup> In the final analysis, Casey considers only some of the New Testament sayings to be authentic: Mk 2:10; 2:27-28; Mk 8:31; 9:11-13; 10:45; 14:21; Mt 8:19-20 // Lk 9:57-58; Mt 11:19 // Lk 7:34; Mt 12:32 // Lk 12:10 with Mk 3:28-29; Lk 12:8-9 // Mt 10:32-33; Mk 8:38; Lk 22:48, while in his opinion none of the John's thirteen sayings belong to the historical Jesus (*Solution*, 274-313).



plies that the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου expression should be first and foremost considered to be the product of the Church, is it possible then to arrive from the early-Christian coinage to the Aramaic idiom and at the same time to objectively draw conclusions about the authenticity of the sayings that contain it? Undoubtedly, Casey's work, as he claims himself, decisively contributes to the problem solution (p. 55), but the question asked still remains without an answer.

### 3. Relevance of the debate for Orthodox theology

After stating the basics of the debate, we raise the question of its relevance for Orthodox theology. In what way, indeed, could the scientific results, arising from the study of the "Son of Man" expression and inseparable from the debate within the foreign hermeneutic framework, be of use to Orthodox biblical scholarship? If the debate in itself demonstrated profound awareness of the fact that "the place of origin of the Son of Man myth must be sought neither in Iran, nor in Judea, not even in Ugarit, but in German universities"<sup>39</sup>, what is the position of the researchers at theological faculties, i.e. universities of those mostly Orthodox countries? Should they, and could they even be involved in this debate? We will give the answer to these questions in the following sequence of reflections, which are at the same time conclusions:

1) First of all, the fact is that in today's Orthodoxy, at each inevitable encounter of every New Testament scholar with the complex field of the "Son of Man", there is an even more inevitable encounter with the scientific contributions of other Christian traditions, certainly culturologically different. By taking a clear stance towards historical criticism in many ways, though not yet at an official level<sup>40</sup>, Orthodox biblical scholarship proves to be a significant participant in the exegetical debates on a global scale. Nevertheless, in its confrontation with the Goliath of the discussed debate, it feels very powerless. The reason for that lies in the abundance of the produced material and often real inability of the researchers to use that material creatively, i.e. to successfully orientate in the labyrinth of issues. In this orientation, as our study shows, a considerably important landmark is provided to the researcher by the (monographic) systematizations of the scientific results of the debate. However, does the use of these reviews singles him out from the other researchers? If, from his environment impoverished by historical circumstances, he has no possibility to contribute to the achievement of fresh scientific results, through e.g. privileged exploration of newly discovered documents, and the like, in what way could he then distinguish himself in the use of the already reached conclusions, and whether such use could have a ripple effect by influencing those conclusions?

2) By raising these questions the answer is definitely anticipated, and hence we think that there is no such reader of the proposed text who does not feel that the most important landmark to an Orthodox exegete should be the Church Tradition, which is always associated with the real needs of the church life. As we understood, it was also a landmark for the Fathers of the Church: although they started their interpretations with genealogi-

<sup>39</sup> P. Winter, "Review of *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, by Norman Perrin", DLZ 89 (1968), 783-785:784.

<sup>40</sup> See: S. Crisp, "Orthodox Biblical Scholarship between Patristics and Postmodernity: A View from the West", in: J. D. G. Dunn – H. Klein – U. Luz – V. Mihoc (Hrsg.), *Auslegung der Bibel in orthodoxer und westlicher Perspektive. Akten des west-östlichen Neutestamentler/innen-Symposiums von Neamt, vom 4.-11. September 1998*, WUNT 130, Tübingen: Mohr 2000, 123-137.

cal reading of the expression, the loyalty to traditional work on Christological challenges of their time led them to deletion of certain articles, that were crucial for that reading; and this need for tradition is particularly noticeable in the harmony of thus achieved expression  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma \ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omicron\upsilon$  with the Old Testament prophecy  $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \ \nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma \ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\acute{\omega}\pi\omicron\upsilon$ , as well as in the fact that the Syriac Fathers, who of all people were able to understand the expression in its original, Aramaic meaning, still translated it in titular sense, thus creating neologisms. Thus, oriented towards Tradition, an Orthodox exegete may make a selection between the existing results, by opting for apocalyptic/messianic interpretation, and even show that between that one and idiomatic/nontitular interpretation there is no essential difference. Such an approach is legitimate (Kubat) and it has its advantages in consulting less known inter-testamental literature and secondary scholarly sources that rest on it, but the question is how he could prove creative. What is more, this question would be particularly expressed if the researcher accepted the challenge of showing the characteristics of the Son of Man in *one New Testament book* – e.g. in one of the four Gospels. How would his research of one New Testament book differ from his research of another, if there was a pre-existent common denominator for all of them? Should one even make any difference?

3) Same as before, this question, too, leads to deeper reflection, but it also leads to recognizing one methodological deficiency of the debate results so far, as its common denominator. Therefore, in contrast to the Orthodox appreciation of tradition, exegetes of other Christian denominations were able to show its deficiency. Their reaction upon the discovery of the new inter-testamental documents goes towards the development of the ‘Son of Man’ concept, which, even though it is close to the Messianic line, opens space for difference between Jesus and the Son of Man. The contributions of another scientific course were even greater, and thus their Son of Man, since he was freed from the chains of tradition, became *tabula rasa* on which individual Christological and anthropological conceptions were written<sup>41</sup>. Such internal and paradoxically unifying orientation of the Western exegetes is most closely associated with their pronounced interest in diachronic exegesis. By exploring individual sayings of the New Testament books, and connecting them with the theological currents in antiquity, these researchers actually stretch the space for debate to its limits. However, they do not only overlook the Church Tradition, as a landmark, but also literary anatomies of the undoubtedly inspired New Testament writers. For, if we were to approach the research of the origin and meaning of the Son of Man from an angle that would not have anything to do with the apriori expected attitudes of previous analysis, and this would be possible in the field of the so called narrative exegesis – whose advantage overlaps with the logical primacy of reading one literary whole as compared to partial study of its parts, it would then be methodologically more accurate to engage in diachronic researches, whether or not they concerned the problems of translation, idiomatic basis of the Greek expression or its titular meaning.

<sup>41</sup> Hans Lietzmann (1875-1942) speaks of this in an interesting manner: “Was hat nicht alles ‘Menschensohn’ bedeuten sollen! Idealmensch, der die Menschennatur verherrlicht; Messias, aber im Gegensatz zum Gottessohn der Juden, als armer, niedriger Mensch; Messias als Träger aller Menschenwürde und Menschenrechte; Messias als präexistenter himmlischer Mensch; Messias als Organ zur Verwirklichung des durch ihn zugleich dargestellten Menschenideales in der Welt; Messias ohne Nebenbedeutung; Bezeichnung des Berufes Jesu, wie sich derselbe durch seine Menschenwerdung bedingte; Messias im Sinne des ‘Idealmenschen’ als Gegensatz gegen den national beschränkten ‘Davididen’; Messias als Erzeugter eines Menschen der Gattung Mensch angehörig; schliesslich soll es Messiasbezeichnung im Sinne eines in starkem Glauben erhobenen Anspruches sein” (*Menschensohn*, 23).

This synchronous approach appears to be quite neglected in the field of “Son of Man” research, and it could be particularly useful when it comes to Orthodox theology. Firstly, by orienting towards biblical books as complete narratives, the encounter of the Orthodox results with the achieved results of the debate loses the denominational feature – in terms of being for or against tradition, and calls for shared understanding of complete biblical stories in which researchers from the most diverse ecclesial and scientific environments could meet; what is more, precisely because of this approach to the “Son of Man”, which is apparently very much reasonable when this Christological title is in question<sup>42</sup>, the researchers in their home environments have the opportunity to creatively connect academic exegesis with the most realistic, vital needs of the Church<sup>43</sup>. Secondly, this is particularly important if the New Testament narratives could prove to be liturgically functional books, in which case Orthodoxy has the opportunity to enrich the Western ecclesiastic-scientific traditions to a greatest extent: in other words, if the Son of Man, for example, of one of the four Gospels, actually played the narrative, and further on liturgical role, then this role could determine all the meanings of the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου title. It is only in this way, we believe, that Orthodox biblical scholarship in the communication with the “Son of Man” debate could prove itself creatively traditional and contemporarily important, whence, it is not exaggeration to say, lies all the strength of its relevance.

## Abbreviations

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| ABD     | Anchor Bible Dictionary                                  |
| ASTI    | Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute              |
| BJRL    | Bulletin of the John Rylands Library                     |
| ΒΕΠΕΣ   | Βιβλιοθήκη Ελλήνων Πατέρων και Εκκλησιαστικῶν Συγγραφέων |
| CUP     | Cambridge University Press                               |
| ΔΒΜ     | <i>Δελτίο Βιβλικῶν Μελετῶν</i>                           |
| DLZ     | Deutsche Literaturzeitung                                |
| HTR     | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>                        |
| JTS     | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>                    |
| NTS     | New Testament Studies                                    |
| PG      | Patrologia Graecae                                       |
| PL      | Patrologia Latina  |
| SNTS    | Society for New Testament Studies                        |
| SNTS.MS | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series       |
| ST      | Srpska teologija u XX veku                               |
| TDNT    | Theological Dictionary of the New Testament              |
| ThWNT   | Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament             |
| TLG     | Thesaurus Linguae Graecae                                |
| ZNW     | Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft       |
| ZWT     | Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie              |

<sup>42</sup> See: U. Luz, “The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge or Human Christ”, JSNT 48 (1992), 3-21.

<sup>43</sup> One such attempt was made by the Russian theologian Alexander Men (1935-1990), who compiled a history of the New Testament era under the name „Сын Человеческий“ [Son of Man], with an intention to pull this, in the full sense man Jesus, out of the shadow of extensive critical analyses, that were not even the intention of the Evangelists, and to offer him to a quite ordinary man through story: А. Мень, *Сын Человеческий*, Москва: Жизнь с Богом 2008.