Son-of-God traditions in the Synoptic Gospels: Ferdinand Hahn's diachronic perspective

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Abstract

This study makes use of Ferdinand Hahn's insights (with Son of God as case study) to indicate how the naming of Jesus developed in stages. It is shown that the name Son of God was not used by Jesus. It functioned within the context of the cultic activities of early Christianity, was taken over from the surrounding religious, political and cultural world while its referential meaning shifted in the various layers. Hahn focuses on the multi-stage development of the Jesus tradition from an Aramaic "Judaism", through a Hellenistic "Judaism" to a Gaeco-Roman stage. First the possible historical origins of the title Son of God are discussed, after which Hahn's view is taken into consideration.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this article the use of Christological titles is studied from the perspective of a *diachronic* (historical-critical) approach to texts. Since the work of Wilhelm Bousset ([1913] 1921) and Rudolf Bultmann ([1921] 1931; [1926] 1988; [1949] 1956), the transition of the Jesus tradition from a "Jewish" context to a "Gentile" context (the *Zweistufen Christologie*) has been studied as a development from "Judaism" to "Hellenism". In this article the *Son-of-God* traditions will be investigated. This title is chosen because it sheds light on the transition from an interpretation of Jesus in an earlier Judaic context to a more Gentile-Hellenistic context. First the historical possibilities of the origins of the title *Son of God* will be discussed, after which the view of Ferdinand

Hahn ([1963] 1974a) will be taken into consideration. Hahn is selected because he refined the point of view put forward by Bousset (the creator of the idea of a distinction between an earlier and a later context). A diachronic analysis of the use of the title *Son of God* (building on the work of Hahn) will then be given: in a more Judean context; in a more Hellenistic context; in a Gentile-Hellenistic context. The article concludes with a synopsis of the results.

In the investigation of the honorary titles used for Jesus, two matters are of importance:

- The principles for the evaluation of the redactional work of the evangelists must be clearly stated at the outset to ensure that this process does not proceed in an arbitrary way.
- *Christological tendencies* can be discerned by investigating the evangelists' redactional work and the selection of Jesus traditions that were incorporated by the evangelists (Hahn 1974:9).

Ferdinand Hahn indicates five Christological honorary titles (*Son of David, Son of Man, Messiah, Kyrios* and *Son of God*) in order to facilitate an accurate analysis of the titles. This distinction does not mean, however, that the titles were used in a compartmentalized way in the tradition (Hahn 1974:10).

2. THE ORIGINS OF THE TITLE "SON OF GOD"

2.1 Historical probabilities

It has become clear that the Hellenistic (second) stratum is important for the titles *Kyrios* and *Son of Man.* This especially holds true for the title *Son of God* (Hahn 1974:12 note 1). The historical-critical investigation of the name, *Son of God*, used for Jesus, set out by searching for the origins of this title. The origins could either have been Judean or Gentile-Hellenistic, or somewhere between the two. Bousset ([1913] 1926:54) questions the Judean origin of the title *Son of God.* Hahn (1974:280), however, is of the opinion that the influence of an Aramaic Judean environment is clear. Yet, it is equally clear that

the referential meaning of the name *Son of God* should also be sought in a Gentile-Hellenistic environment (cf Bultmann [1958] 1968:130-132). If the name originated in the Judean environment it has something to do with "kingship" and Jesus as God's "anointed One". If the origin were Hellenistic, it would be in the sphere of divine origins and Jesus' relationship to God. With regard to the possible Judean roots of the expression "son of god", the opinions, according to Hahn, differ widely as to the precise origin of the concept.

Feine (1934:47-55), Stauffer (1948:93-94), Bultmann (1968:52-53) and Kümmel (1950:131) are of the opinion that, for Judean Israelites, the expression "son of god" originated in the context of *royal messianology*. In Israel the term *mashiah* was used for the reigning king Saul who was called "messiah" (1 Sam 26:9 *et al*). His successors were also called by this name (those from the house of David). The same tendency can also be found in the "royal psalms", that were probably sung in the context of the inauguration of Davidic kings (Ps 2:2; 89:51 *et al*). Kings were called "messiah" because they were anointed with oil (1 Sam 10:1; 1 Ki 1:39). In addition there was the connotation that God's presence enabled the king to perform his special task. Not only kings, but also priests and prophets were anointed for their task and were therefore called "messiah". An example of a king who was called "messiah" was the Persian ruler Cyrus, called "messiah" in Isaiah 45:1 because he was God's chosen one who would free the Judean captives. Even before the Babylonian captivity, Isaiah (9:2-7; 11:1-9) and Michah (5:2-6) initiated the expectation of an *ideal Davidic ruler* who would do God's will (Tatum 1999:158). Later the prophets Jeremiah (23:5-6; 33:14-18) and Ezekiel also anticipated the restoration of God's people under the leadership of a just and righteous Davidic ruler.

By the first century C.E. the term "messiah" expressed the expectation that God would send a saviour to free Israel from Roman oppression. The term indicated a future king from the house of David. Just as in earlier periods, the name "messiah" became associated with other types of religious leaders. There was the expectation that God would send a *priestly saviour* from the line of Aaron (the brother of Moses), the first high priest. The Qumran sect also expected two types of messianic figures: a high priest from the line of Aaron and one from the line of David (cf 1 QS [Manual of Discipline] 9:10-11 which refers to the "messiah(s) of Aaron and Israel"). In the time of Jesus the name

Messiah was used as an honorary title (Tatum 1999:158). According to the gospels Jesus did, at times, use the expression "messiah". In John 4:26 Jesus conceded to the Samaritan woman that he was the "messiah". In Luke 4:16-30 Jesus reads from the "messianic" Isaiah 61 and then speaks about his own ministry. But the focal point of the New Testament idea of Jesus' "messiahship" is Mark 8:27-33 par. and Mark 14:53-65 par. (Tatum 1999:159).

According to Tatum (1999:159), if the specific Marcan redactional material (Mk 8:30 = the messianic secret motif; Mk 8:31-32 = announcement of Jesus' passion) is removed from the first pericope (Mk 8:27-33), Jesus is presented as not responding positively to the confession of Peter that he is the *Messiah*. Jesus rejects Peter's statement and calls him "Satan". He rebukes Peter that he acts according to the human will and not according to God's will (Tatum 1999:159). Concerning the second pericope (Mk 14:61a-62), Jesus answers the high priest's question in such a way that it seems as though he accepts being the *Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One* (ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ). Mark connects this positive answer directly to a Jesus saying that the *Son of Man* will be seen "sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven". Of this *logion* two things can be said: firstly, that the description of the *Son of Man* as sitting at the right hand of the One who has power, was taken from Daniel 7:13-14, and, secondly, that this *Son of Man logion* bears evidence of Marcan redaction (Tatum 1999:159). Both Matthew and Luke differ from Mark in this regard. According to them, Jesus answered the question of the high priest evasively ("it is as you say"), not affirmatively ("I am"). These words cannot be considered as authentic words of Jesus, but rather as a Marcan "supplement".

Matthew and Luke are independent of each other and therefore the "minor agreement" between them (the evasive answer) probably goes back to Q^3 which was used by them both, but not by Mark, who seemed to only have known Q^2 (see Van Aarde 1999a:804). A reasonable explanation could be that Q^1 (and the historical Jesus) did not know of the high priest's question or the response, but that it can be attributed to redactional work by Mark. Mark probably did this on the grounds of his confession that Jesus is the *suffering Messiah and Son of God*, and not the political, national messiah, *Son of David*. It would also be the reason for his motif of the "messianic secret" (see Mk

8:30). Therefore Mark sees Jesus as the triumphant, apocalyptic *Son of Man* who will come with might. This *motif* of *Son of Man* is not peculiar to Mark. He probably took it over from the Jesus movement in Jerusalem. Matthew and Luke also get it via the Jerusalem faction. The Q tradition does not confess Jesus to be the *Messiah*. At the time of Q^3 Jesus was, however, widely recognized as "messiah" and therefore Q presents an evasive answer to the question of the high priest. Matthew and Luke take the evasive answer over from Q^3. One can conclude that Mark saw Jesus as "messiah" in a qualified way, but that Jesus did not see himself as such.

Friedrich (1956:279-281) and Grundmann (1956:113-133) see the context of the origin of "messiah" as the expectation of an ideal *messianic high priest*. However, Mowinckel ([1951] 1956:293-294, 366-368) and Lohmeyer ([1951] 1953:4-5) see the name *Son of God* as an *apocalyptic* designation and therefore find the origins of its application to Jesus in the context of the *Son of Man* sayings in the Judean-Israelite tradition. Some scholars saw a connection between the expression "my beloved son" and the *ebed Jahweh* tradition. Hahn (1974:280 note 6) refers to Dalman ([1889] 1930:226-228), Bousset (1926:56-57), Cullmann (1948:11-13; 1957:65) and Jeremias ([1936] 1966:107-115) who see a correspondence between the baptism scene (Mk 1:11 – καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα) and the story of Jesus' transfiguration (Mk 9:7 – ... καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ) which they relate to the *ebed Jahweh*/παῖς Θεοῦ tradition (cf also Jeremias 1952:698-713). According to D L Bock (see C M Tuckett, in Verheyden 1999:975-976), Luke's writings represent a so-called "high" Christology of Jesus as the *Messiah-Servant*. However, Tuckett is not convinced by this argument.

Grundmann (1956:113-133) and Cullmann ([1955] 1958:281-284) understood the concept of "sonship", expressed by the title *Son of God* as an idea that emanated from Jesus' relationship to God as his father (*Vaterglaube Jesu*). Cullmann uses the terms *Gotteskindschaft* and *Sohnesbewußtsein Jesu* to express the same notion. He was of the opinion that the παῖς Θεοῦ tradition, taken over from the Hebrew Scriptures, merged with the *Vaterglaube Jesu* concept.

2.2 Ferdinand Hahn's viewpoint

Hahn, along with Bultmann, sought the origins of the title *Son of God* in a Hellenistic environment. The question is what the influence of Hellenism was in this early stage. There are three possibilities:

- the Hellenistic cultic conventions were *mixed* with those of the Israelite religion;
- Gentile-Hellenistic conventions *replaced* the Israelite ones;
- the Hellenistic replaced the Israelite conventions only after the Israelite environment in Jerusalem had ceased to exist (after 70 CE).

Hahn's exposition and understanding of the dynamics of the use of *Son of God* by early Jesus followers takes all of this into account. When he considers the Israelite and Hellenistic contexts of the early Jesus followers, Hahn reflects on the known options of how they could have understood the title *Son of God*:

- Does the gospel tradition contain evidence of an integration of a royal messianology with the mystery religions? Royal messianology can occur in different variations. It was possible that "Christian scribes" (analogous to temple centred officials) connected the idea of a royal messiah figure with the ideals surrounding a high priestly figure. It was also possible that, in an apocalyptic context, the messiah was linked to a son of man figure who would introduce the end-time kingdom of God. In some circles scholars are of the opinion that early Jesus followers saw the *ebed Jahweh* concept as related to a "suffering messianic figure" who was the obedient "servant of God" (see Maurer 1953:1-38).
- Or, at this early stage of the development of the gospel tradition, with regard to the background of the title *Son of God*, was it possible that there was no witness to a royal messianology, but only references to the sonship idea taken over from the Graeco-Roman mystery religions?
- Or should the exegete rather look for traditions that attest to an early Israelite influence that developed into traditions influenced by a Hellenistic environment?

Hahn (1974:292-308) chose the option of those son-of-god traditions that attest to an early Israelite influence which was still present in the Hellenistic environment. He substantiated his choice by analyzing in detail the existing *Son of God* traditions in the New Testament. From this he created a synthesis (a synopsis) in order to understand what the early Jesus followers could possibly have meant by the title *Son of God* when applied to Jesus as a cultic figure. This view differs from that of Heitmüller (1912:320-337) who emphasized that the earliest literary witness (before Mark was written) found in the New Testament are the writings of Paul. Paul is therefore important for knowledge of the nature of earliest Christianity. Since Paul was a prime example of an early *Christian* (technically referring to a member of the Jesus movement in Antioch and Damascus, among others – cf Acts 11:26) who came from a Hellenistic environment, Heitmuller was of the opinion that Paul's theology did not originate in Palestinian Christianity, but rather came via the Hellenistic church in Antioch. According to him an idea such as the reconciliation through the death of Jesus, evolved in this setting (cf Bultmann [1949] 1956:196-208). In the Pauline writings this soteriological notion is central. "There can be no doubt as to where the centre of gravity of Paul's theology is to be found. It lies in the death and resurrection of Jesus" (Dunn 1998:208). However, there is no evidence that such a soteriological notion could have been based on the sayings and deeds of Jesus (contra Dunn 1998:195). The conclusion is that, in order to understand the context of earliest Christianity, it is necessary to explore the world of Hellenism (see Bultmann 1956:103-208). Heitmuller's ideas (which came from Bousset) were taken further by scholars such as Bultmann and Hahn.

Hahn (1974:10-12), however, distinguished two different sectors in Hellenistic Christianity, namely the Hellenistic-Israelite and the Hellenistic-Gentile. The Hellenistic Israelites were bilingual and spoke Aramaic (their mother tongue) and Greek (the *lingua franca*). The possibility should be kept in mind that an Aramaic speaking group opposed any Hellenistic influence. It is even possible that Matthew, influenced by such a group in Jerusalem, was critical of the "Hellenist" Paul and his "law-free" gospel (see Sim 1998:573-587). Subsequently Hahn (1974:10-12) divided early Christianity into three sections, corresponding with the three existing ethnic cultural groups, an Aramaic speaking Judean group, a Judean-Hellenistic group and a Gentile-Hellenistic group.

Hahn is of the opinion that one should not think of the cultic activities of these three groups as taking place in three different centres. One should also not think that the traditions that came from these cultic activities developed in chronological stages as though each represented a different time-span. This means that the names these groups used for Jesus should not be seen in isolation from one another. If Hahn chose the third option of a "development" from the Judean to a Hellenistic stage, the question is whether one could then say that there was no Hellenistic influence to be seen in the earliest Aramaic-Judean stage. It is, however, conceivable that the gospel tradition represented layers that were transmitted from the Aramaic-speaking scribes in Judea to the Gentile world (cf Hahn 1974:35). Some ideas originated in a specific stage, while others developed through different stages.

2.3 The title *Son of God* in a more Judean context

It has become clear that the presentations of "son of God" in the Hebrew Scriptures form part of the Israelite royal traditions regarding the House of David. The early history of this title can be traced from ancient Middle-Eastern royal households and their mythical presentation, via Canaanite royal courts to the use of the title in the Israelite tradition. Exponents of the Scandinavian School of History (e g, G Widengren and T Thompson) demonstrate a uniform ritual pattern underlying this ideology. The representation of "son of god" was articulated in various ways in the ancient East. Only in Egypt was there any reference to an immediate and physical sonship. In the Mesopotamian milieu the godly honour and legitimacy of the king were of particular importance. In the Israelite royal tradition all these elements were combined. For example, the names (titles) in Isaiah 9:5 indicate a direct Egyptian influence. In the Hebrew Scriptures there was a tendency to remove the mythical representations of Yahweh's interaction with humankind. However, another exponent of the Scandinavian School, Knud Jeppesen (1994:158-163) shows in his work, "Then began men to call upon the name of Yahweh", that this tendency was not entirely successful. This can be seen in the Judean-Hellenistic document, The Book of Jubilees (cf also Joseph and Asenath – see Standartinger 1995, 1996), where the mythological representation of God's interaction with human beings (especially regarding sexuality) recurs. An example in the Bible can be found in Genesis 6:1-4.

The aim of this mythology was to attribute divine status to specific heroic figures. However, according to the conventional Israelite view no creature could have divine status (see Ex 20:3-5a). The reason for attempting to remove mythological elements was to protect the holiness of the transcendental God. If these elements would have remained, the implication would have been that heroic figures, such as the king, would have had divine status. For the emphasis to remain on the humanness of the king, his sonship of God could only be possible as a sonship by means of adoption by Jahweh. The question is, therefore, whether the "son of God" motif is to be found in the period of formative Judaism in a context where the concept of "royal messiah" was also known. Scholars such as Kümmel (1934:129-130), Dalman ([1898] 1902:268-273) and Bousset (1926:53-54) do not seem to think so. Hahn, however, does not agree. He admits that texts such as AethHen 105:2; IV Ezra 7:28; 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9 cannot be used in order to prove the point (Hahn 1974:285). The relevant reference in AethHen does not occur in the oldest existing Semitic fragment behind the Greek translation. The expression *filius meus* in IV Ezra does refer to a messianic figure, but, according to Hahn it is not connected with the "son of God" motif, but was originally related to the term *abdi* (עבדי). According to Hahn only the early "rabbinical" use of Psalm 2:7 in the Judean context can be regarded as valid texts for investigation whether the term "son of God" was used in the Judean environment. Hahn posits the following as valid references:

- A baraita from b Sukka 52a (cf Strack & Billerbeck 1922-1928, III:19), dated circa 200 CE, identified the "son of God" mentioned in Psalm 2:7 with the "messiah ben David".
- The connection between Psalm 2:7 and the messiah is found explicitly in the Judean polemic (cf Strack & Billerbeck 1922-1928:20-22) against the "Christian" (in a Judean-Hellenistic environment – YD) representation of Jesus as the *Son of God* and, therefore, someone with divine status (*Rang/Funktion* – Bultmann).
- In the pre-Christian era Q 4 Florilegium can be regarded as evidence that the Qumran sect (or their Jerusalem predecessors) makes a connection between the concepts "son of God" and "royal messiah" (see Huntress 1935:117-123; cf Brownlee 1956/7:12-30, 195-210; Brown 1957:53-82). The reference to the

"promise to David" in 2 Samuel 7:11f, 14a is connected with the coming of the *zemah David* (זמח דויד) (see Van der Woude 1957:43-45, 61-63, 96-98, 112-114, 169-171). In this Qumran text the "root of David" (זמח דויד) is identified with the "highpriestly messiah" (Hahn 1974:285 note 6; cf Black 1966:4-11; Kuhn 1954/5:168-179; Smith 1959:66-72). Important to this study is that the "root of David" refers to a "teacher of the Torah" (*Erforscher der Tora*). It can then be concluded that the concept "son of God" combined with "royal messiah", was known to Judean (Essene) scribes. Qumran scribes combined the concept "son of God" in Psalm 2:7 and the concept of the "fallen hut of David" in Amos 9:11 in 4 Q Flor 10-14 (cf Allegro 1956:152; Van der Woude 1957:173-174).

For this study it is important to note that, in the conclusion to the Apostolic Convent in Acts 15:16-17 a similar citation from Amos 9:11 is placed on the lips of "the scribe" James, the brother of Jesus. In this citation the expression "the restoration of the hut of David" (ἀνοικοδομήσω τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ) (cf Van Aarde 1991:51-64) is used as an *honorary* reference to Jesus. In order to present a unified front of early Christianity, Luke reinterprets the anti-Hellenistic-Gentile tradition of James and Peter, giving James the authority to "allow" Paul to become the missionary to the Gentiles. The expression *skene David* (σκηνή Δαυὶδ) is a concept which directly opposes that of "temple in Jerusalem", the latter being the fixed cultic institution, whereas the "hut of David" suggests a "mobile" (see Gärtner 1965:30-42) temporary structure, a metaphor for God "moving" from the traditional cultic setting to the Gentile people. This motif probably has to do with the Stephen saying which refers to the tabernacle and to the "house of God that was not built with human hands" (see Acts 7:44, 48-50). In Acts 7:44, 48-50 Stephen uses the motif of the tabernacle (a temporary, mobile dwelling) to express his opposition to the Jerusalem temple. He employs a Jesus saying (Mk 13:1-2; 14:57-58) as support for his idea that the death of Jesus resulted in a rebuilt temple not constructed with human hands. According to Luke, James announced that non-Judeans (τά ἔθνη) will worship Jesus as the *Kyrios* because Jesus restored Israel. The context of Luke-Acts is clearly Judean-Hellenistic and Luke refers back to a scribal tradition that originated in the Aramaic-speaking Jesus faction in Jerusalem.

According to Hahn (1974:285), 4 Q Flor 10-14 is evidence that a connection between the concept "royal messiah" and the concept "son of God" was made in the Judean environment (formative Judaism). This was not influenced by the later use of the term "son of God" in normative Judaism. In normative rabbinical (Talmudic) writings the term "son of God" was used with and without a connection to the theme of "royal messiah" in Psalm 2:7. Examples of evidence that the term "son of God" was used independently of the connection with "royal messiah" (as referred to in Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14a) in normative Judaism are MekhEx 15:9 (48b) and TargPs 80:16 (see Hahn 1974:286; cf Strack & Billerbeck 1922-28:676-677; 1922-28:19-20 rsp). A further example from the Qumran texts that the connection between the concept "son of God" and the concept "royal messiah" was known in the Judean environment, is 1 Q Samuel II.11. In this text and in 2 Samuel 7:11-14 the connection between "royal messiah" and "son of God" is not explicitly mentioned. However, the motif "son of God" appears within the framework of the tradition that people could be legitimated (adopted) as sons of God. This pertains to the notion of "*messianic* adoptionism" attested to in the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, these texts (1 Q Sam II.11 and 2 Sam 7:11-14) cannot be used as evidence that "son of God" was used as a title, independent of its connection with "royal messiah", in formative Judaism (see Hahn 1974:287). Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:11-14 are eschatological texts. They refer to the coming of an ideal Israelite king who will conquer the enemies of the people (Ps 2:7) and will maintain the Davidic dynasty in future (2 Sam 7:11-14).

Hahn's specific contribution to understanding the use of the title *Son of God* in the Judean-Hellenistic environment, is that this title should be interpreted "eschatologically". He firstly asks what the title *Son of God* meant to the Jesus faction in Jerusalem. He presumes that *Messiah* as well as *Son of God* were used to express the expectation of an "ideal king". The expected "king" was not thought of in terms of how kings performed in the *past*, but rather in terms of what an "ideal" king would do in the *future*. Evidence in especially the Hebrew Scriptures, contributed to this insight. The messianic era or ideal time will begin with the coming of this expected king. In the prophets this time is referred to as *the Day of the Lord* (see Amos 5:18-20) which is supposed to mean the end of war between God and God's enemies. It is described in Psalm 2:7-9: "I will proclaim

the decree of the Lord: [the Lord] said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery'" (NIV). In apocalyptic texts this function of a royal messiah is projected onto the *Son of Man* who will come upon the clouds (see Dan 7:11-14).

These texts are evidence that, in the earliest Aramaic-Judean stratum, the combination of the titles *Son of God* and *royal Messiah* referred to God's salvific act through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. This salvific act of God is projected into the future by identifying Jesus as the *Messiah* with the *Son of Man*, who will come on the clouds at the end of time (cf Van Aarde 1998:16-26). In the use of the title *Son of God* in the early Jesus movements, Hahn sees the Judean and Hellenistic strata overlapping. In a more Hellenistic environment the title *Son of God* was used to affirm the divine origin of a ruler or an heroic figure, and describe the divine authority of a ruler or an heroic figure. In a more Judean stratum the ruler was seen as a messianic (Davidic) figure. In the earliest Jesus faction in Jerusalem *Son of Man* indicated divine authority. In this (apocalyptic) stratum both designations, *Messiah* and *Son of Man*, presuppose an act in the *future*. On account of this Hahn describes the role of the *Son of God* (divine ruler as the *Messiah* and an apocalyptic figure with divine authority such as the *Son of Man*) as futuristic. Therefore, Hahn cannot accept that the pre-Easter Jesus thought of himself as the *Son of God* in this sense. The Jesus faction in Jerusalem, however, attributed the role of *Son of God* to the exalted Jesus. Hahn does not agree with Cullmann (1958:276-313) who wants to limit the work of Jesus as *Son of God* to his pre-existence. Hahn's specific contribution was to highlight the Jesus faction in Jerusalem's interpretation of Jesus, the work of the *Messiah* and *Son of Man*, as eschatological (Hahn 1974:287).

Hahn's insight that a connection between the role of the *Son of Man* and the *royal Messiah* exists, was built chiefly on a combination of Psalm 2 (*royal Messiah*) and Psalm 110 (the *triumphant warrior*, i.e. *Son of Man*). The combination of these two passages seems to have been a common tradition in the Judean-Hellenistic era. It can be seen in the two independent citations in different passages: Acts 4:25-26 and Hebrews 1:8-9. In these combinations of the two Psalms, the titles *Messiah* (see the Greek word ἔχρισέν and

τοῦ Χριστοῦ), *Son of God*, *Son of Man* and *Kyrios* are all used to designate Jesus as an end-time and triumphant ruler. Hahn (1974:288) summarizes this "eschatological" viewpoint as follows: "Die Bezeichnung 'Gottessohn' ist ursprünglich ebenfalls auf Jesu endzeitliche Funktion angewandt worden" (Hahn 1974:288). One can conclude that in formative Judaism (including the Jesus faction in Jerusalem) the designation *Son of God* was not an independent representation as it became in normative Judaism. In formative Judaism it remained embedded within the concept of the royal messianology. In the earliest community of Jesus followers *Son of God* had an "eschatological" function.

Hahn proceeds to investigate the history of the transmission (*Überlieferungsgeschichte*) of *Son of God*. His point of departure is the perspective of "eschatological messianology". He used the following texts:

- Luke 1:32-33 – "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.
- Mark 14:61-62 – "... the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' 'I am', said Jesus. 'And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'" (NIV).

With regard to Luke 1:32-33, Hahn analyzes the formulation and content of these verses, focusing on the expressions υἱὸς ὑψίστου, τὸν θρόνον Δαυιδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ and βασιλεύσει ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰακὼβ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. According to him, this passage clearly demonstrates the "alte diesseitig-politische Ausformung" and, therefore the "Abhängigkeit von altestamentlich-jüdischer Denkweise" (Hahn 1974:288). In Mark 14:61-62 the title *Son of God* is merged with *Messiah* and *Son of Man*. Mark combined Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13: "Es unterliegt keinem Zweifel, daß die Hohepriesterfrage Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ; in Sinne eines Hendiadyon zu verstehen ist."

The source of Jesus' implied conditional acceptance of the name *Messiah* (according to Mark and Luke) can be traced back to the Jesus faction in Jerusalem. In Mark this acceptance was interpreted from the perspective of the "eschatological" *Son of Man*. Therefore, the titles *Messiah*, *Son of Man* and *Son of God* are used "only" when

designating Jesus' "endzeitliche Wirken" (Hahn 1974:289 note 3). This early royal messianic tradition can also be seen in a pre-Pauline formula in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10. According to Hahn, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 links the title *Son of Man* with the "eschatological" work of Jesus (cf Lk 1:32-33; Mk 14:61-62). This demonstrates that the connection did not completely disappear in the earliest transmission of the Hellenistic Jesus movement (Hahn 1974:289). It is clear, however, that the expectation of the parousia was already beginning to fade into the background and the idea of the exalted Jesus was beginning to take its place (Hahn 1974:290 – cf also Acts 17:31 where a parallel of the "Nebeneinanders von Auferstehung Jesu und eschatologischer Richtertätigkeit" can be found (Hahn 1974:290). "Auf Grund von 1 Thess 1,9f ergibt sich, daß die endzeitlich ausgerichtete Verwendung des Gottessohntitels noch in der Missionspredigt der hellenistischen Gemeinde wirksam geblieben ist ... Die der königlichen Messianologie entstammenden Aussagen wurden dabei von dem endzeitlichen Wirken Jesu abgelöst und auf seine gegenwärtige Würde und Funktion im Himmel übertragen" (Hahn 1974:290).

However, the titles *Son of Man, Son of David, Messiah* and *Son of God*, combined up to this point, moved apart in a more Hellenistic environment:

- The representation of *Son of Man* no longer included the motif of exaltation, but was limited to expressions concerning the parousia and pre-Easter life of Jesus, for instance his passion (cf *inter alia* Lk 22:69; Acts 7:56).
- *Son of David*, which was associated with the futuristic messianic kingdom in a more Judean context, was now also applied to the pre-Easter Jesus within the framework of the so-called *Zweistufenchristologie* (see Rm 1:3-4 – cf Schweizer 1957:11; Hahn 1974:251-253); from here onward Psalm 110:1 was linked to the *theologoumenon* of the exalted Christ (Hahn 1974:291).
- The titles *Christ* and *Son of God* were also used for the exalted Jesus (cf Mk 12:35-37; Acts 2:36; Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; Col 1:13 [ὁ υἱός]; cf also 1 Cor 15:28 where the "ursprüngliche Verbindung dieser Würdebezeichnung mit der Erhöhungsvorstellung" can clearly be seen – Hahn 1974:291). Paul, however, does not regard the term "Christ" as a title anymore, but uses it as a proper noun

for Jesus, together with the *Würdeprädikation Kyrios* (cf Rm 1:7 – κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Yet, sometimes Paul combines the *present* (post-existence) work of the exalted Jesus (*Kyrios*) with *Son of God.* Here the title *Son of God* should be understood as "umfassender Würdetitel für das gesamte Wirken Christi" (Hahn 1974:292). In conclusion: "[D]er Umformungsprozeß der beim Messiasbegriff zu erkennen war, hat sich aber auch hier ausgewirkt, so daß 'Gottessohn' ein bezeichnendes Prädikat des Erhöhten wurde, der von Gott adoptiert und in sein himmliches Amt eingesetzt ist. Dies hat im Rahmen der Zweistufenchristologie eine große Rolle gespielt (Rom 1, 3f), jedoch auch sonst stark nachgewirkt" (Hahn 1974:292).

2.4 The title *Son of God* in a more Hellenistic context

The *theologoumenon* of the exalted Jesus underwent certain changes after having come into contact with and being influenced by the Gentile world. Elements of the representation *theios aner* (θεῖος ἀνήρ) were incorporated in the concept "son of God". In the Hebrew Scriptures the "men of God" (θεῖοι ἄνθρωποι/*Gottesmänner*) are called *ish haelohim* (איש האלהים) (e g, Elijah, Elisha, Moses): "Ekstase, Prophetie und Wundertun sind zwar in beiden Fällen [ancient Israel and Judean Hellenism] bezeichnende Äußerungsformen" (Hahn 1974:293 note 4). There was, however, a distinct difference between the ancient Israelite "men of God" and the Hellenistic *theioi anthropoi*. With regard to the ancient Israelite "men of God", the human did not partake in the godly. It was a "völlige Unterordnung unter Gott". With the *theioi anthropoi*, however, "die Göttlichkeit des Menschen oder die Möglichkeit zu seinen Partizipieren an Göttlichem, ja zu seiner Vergöttung" was a possibility. Hellenization came slowly and traces of how Hellenistic Judeans saw ancient Israelite "men of God" can be seen in the Epistula Aristeae 140. This process reached its culmination in Philo, who no longer regarded Abraham, Moses and the prophets as ordinary human beings. Israelite Hellenists (see *inter alia* JosBell VII.344; JosAnt VI.76; VIII.34), however, did not see the divine nature of these human beings as "eine naturhaft gegebene Göttlichkeit". Philo (in Hahn 1974:294-295 – cf Ex 7:1), when referring to the "men of God", indicates an intervention of God and "der damit bewirkten Ausrüstung zum Gottesmann".

How *theios aner* was understood, influenced the naming of Jesus in a Judean-Hellenistic context. According to Hahn (1974:295-308), this can be seen in the way in which exorcisms (e.g., in Mk 5:1-20), the baptismal story (Mk 1:9-11), the temptation story (Mt 4:1-7) and the virginal conception of Jesus (Lk 1:26-38) were reported by New Testament writers embedded in a Judean-Hellenistic context. In the reports of Jesus' exorcisms (see esp Mk 5:1-20) the portrayal of the *Gottesmänner* in a Judean-Hellenistic environment underwent a change under influence of the θεῖος ἀνήρ concept. Miracles were regarded as possible only because they were accomplished by the Spirit of God, performed by charismatics, in other words as "gottgewirkte Machttäten" on account of the "Geistbesitz Jesu". Exorcism stories should be understood from the perspective of the Mediterranean challenge-reposte mentality (see Malina & Neyrey 1988). In his book, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums*, Wrede ([1901] 1971:25) describes the "struggle" of "spirits" as similar to competition among people: "Spirit comprehends spirit" ["Geist steht gegen Geist und der Geist begreift der Geist"]. The influence of Judean Hellenism can especially be seen in the usage of the title *Son of God*. The exorcism story of the healing of the *impure* Legion, who lived among the graves at Gerasa (Hellenistic Decapolis in the Trans-Jordan region), is an example of how the Judean *charismatic* element changed on account of Hellenistic influence. The use of the title *Son of God* in this story (Mk 5:1-20) compared to another story which shows less Hellenistic influence (e.g., the healing of the man with the unclean spirit in Capernaum – Mk 1:21-28) illustrates how the title *Son of God* moved further away from a charismatic situation.

In the Gospel of Mark the *places* where these two incidents occur, are of narratological importance. The healing of Mark 1:21-28 takes place at Capernaum in Galilee (v 21, 28). The incident in Mark 5:1-20 occurs at Gerasa in the Decapolis (v 1, 20). Galilee is Israelite territory, whereas the Decapolis is Gentile territory. Capernaum is the location of a synagogue and the house belonging to Peter, Andrew and the sons of Zebedee (v 23, 29). Reference to a synagogue is an indication of scribal activity. Jesus is portrayed as a teacher (rabbi/γραμματεύς) whose authority (charismatic) opposes the authority of other γραμματεῖς (v 22). Gerasa was a centre of Roman power, symbolized by the name Legion (see Myers [1988] 1992:190-194). In both stories unacceptability according to

the Judean purity system is emphasized. According to Mark 1:26, an impure spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον) possessed a man. Mark 5:2 reports that Legion was a man with an impure spirit, who dwelled among graves (ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνευματί ἀκαθάρτω ὅς τὴν κατοίκησιν εἶχεν ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν). Both men ask Jesus the same question: Τί ἐμοί καί σοί; (Mk 1:24; Mk 5:6). However, they address Jesus differently. In Mark 1:24 Jesus is addressed as *Jesus of Nazareth, the holy one* (charismatic – see Borg [1987] 1991; 1994:69-95) *of God* (Ἰησοῦ Ναζαρηνέ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ). In Mark 5:7 Jesus is addressed as *Jesus, son of the Most High God* (Ἰησοῦ υἱέ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑπίστου;). The reference to swine as impure animals brings an Israelite element into a story with a more Hellenistic *Sitz im Leben* (the Legion story). The *Sitz im Leben* of the first story is more Israelite. The Hellenistic *Sitz im Leben* represents a shift away from the understanding of Jesus as charismatic figure. The use of the title *Son of God* by a man who represents Roman power, indicates that there is a movement taking place away from the historical Jesus. The core element of healing in both stories can be traced back to Jesus (see Funk 1999 [and the Jesus Seminar]:25, 33). The use of titles for Jesus cannot be seen as an "authentic enactment" (see Funk [and the Jesus Seminar] 1998:27).

The baptismal story (Mark 1:9-11) is also representative of a connection between the title *Son of God* and a *charismatic Jesus*, "... der als Träger des Geistes Macht über die Dämonen hat ..." (Hahn 1974:301). In this narrative of Jesus' baptism, elements of the Israelite representation of the messiah can be recognized, for instance Jesus' God-given (messianic) role combined with the king's adoption as "son of God", which always took place in the presence of the Spirit (Hahn 1974:308). Mark places the temptation story (Mk 1:12-13) directly after the baptismal story. In the Marcan report no titles are given for Jesus. In Mark both these stories can be seen as a rite of passage (Van Gennep 1961:950; McVann 1991:151-157), the temptation story confirming the baptism of Jesus. The Matthean (4:1-11) version of the temptation story, is a further example of how the Judean charismatic element was influenced by Hellenism (Hahn 1974:305). In Matthew's version the titles *Son of God* (υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ -Mt 4:6) and *Kyrios God* (κύριος ὁ θεός – Mt 4:7, 10) are used. This story shows the possibility for the *Son of God* to abuse his given power – does he use his own power (*Werk Jesu*) or is he completely obedient to his God-given commission (*Auftrag = unabdingbare Bindung an Gott*)?

According to Hahn (1974:303) the Matthean temptation story can be better understood when seen in the light of the combination of the *Messiah* taking up his office and the gentile *theios aner* concept: "Der Gottessohn darf seine Macht weder zur Selbsthilfe noch für ein Schauwunder mißbrauchen, sondern allein für den Auftrag, den er erhälten hat. So ist die Gottessohnschaft gerade im Zusammenhang mit der Ausrüstung durch die wunderbare Macht des Geistes von dem Gedanken des Gehorsams geprägt".

The Lucan story of the virginal conception of Jesus (Luke 1:26-38) is a theological (ideological) construct of the Judean-Hellenistic Jesus movement which serves as the fundamental basis of the concept of the exaltation of Jesus. The core of the narrative is the "Jungfraulichkeit der Maria" (the virginity of Mary). The announcement of Jesus' virginal conception includes naming, attributing honorary titles (*Würdeprädikationen*) to Jesus (Hahn 1974:305): "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name *Jesus*. He will be *great* (μέγας) and will be called the *Son of the Most High* (υἱός ὑψίστου). The Lord God (κύριος ὁ θεός) will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end (Lk 1:31-33)". The sonship of Jesus is dependent on an act of the Spirit who can generate life without the help of a man. Hahn (1974:305-306) formulates it as follows: "Der heilige Geist ist dabei nicht als inspiratorische Kraft, sondern als 'schöpferische Lebensmacht' verstanden". The story of the virginal conception indicates that Jesus would be a heroic figure later in his life, on account of which Mary would acknowledge him as a *Gotteskind*: "... his mother treasured all these things in her heart [cf Jesus' references to God as his Father – Lk 2:49]. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature [σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ χάριτι] and in favour with God and men" (Lk 2:52) (cf Dibelius (1932:16). Such a heroic birth presupposes that the child is a royal figure with divine status (see the reference to ἡλικίᾳ, which can either mean "greatness" or can indicate someone who has reached the age of maturity, who has completed the rite of passage – cf Newman 1971:80). Though the text does not explicitly state it, the underlying meaning of the Lucan nativity story points to the inauguration of a king (adopted/legitimated as God's son – cf Crossan 1994:59-81) to office. Hahn (1974:306-308) sees the birth of Jesus as the anticipation of his future (after his death and resurrection) reign.

Israelite and Hellenistic motifs are combined here: the motif of the *Jungfrau* is Israelite (referring to Israelite women who were known for miraculous births, such as Hannah, Rachel etc – see Sheres & Blau 1995). The motif of the exclusion of the man from conception is Hellenistic (see Hahn 1974:304 note 4). The motif of enthronement is Israelite, whereas the motif of the Spirit's presence with an important person is Hellenistic (see Hahn 1974:307-308). "Eine Gottesohnschaft im physischen Sinne liegt jedenfalls noch nicht vor" – this concept of preexistence was only fully developed in a Hellenistic setting (Hahn 1974:308).

2.5 The title *Son of God* in a more Gentile-Hellenistic context

In the Hellenistic-Israelite environment the gifts of the Spirit of God were understood as an enabling power. In the Gentile-Hellenistic world the Spirit of God permeates the very nature of Jesus (*einer wesensmäßigen Durchdringung* – Hahn 1974:319). The tradition developed from the idea of enthronement of a king in the messianic sense, to a functional Christology in the time when the New Testament was written. Since the second century functional Christology developed into an ontological Christology (Van Aarde 1999b:441-456). This process culminated in the anti-Arian polemic of the fourth century (see Grillmeier 1965:175-237). The beginning of this process can be seen in the story of the transfiguration of Jesus (*Verklärungsgeschichte Epiphanieerzählung*) (Mark 9:2-8 – cf Lohmeyer 1922:185-215; Schmithals 1972:379-411; Hahn 1974:334-340). Two motifs stand out in the Marcan editorial reinterpretation of "eine alte Traditionsschicht" (Hahn 1974:310). The presence of the messianic secret motif in Mark 9:9 is an indication of redactional activity in the transfiguration story. The two motifs found in Mark 9:2 are the naming title *Son of God* and the metamorphosis motif. According to Hahn: "Das μεταμορφοῦσθαι ist zweifellos als terminus technicus gebraucht". The motif *Son of God* is explained by the metamorphosis motif. The latter comes from the Hellenistic mystery religions (see Reitzenstein 1910). However, according to Hahn (1974:312), the metamorphosis does not refer to an *apotheosis* (deification) of a hero, transformed into a god-like figure. In the traditional source behind the redaction of Mark Jesus calls God Father (*Vaterglaube Jesu*). In the "source" behind Mark, Peter addressed Jesus as "Rabbi" (Mk 9:5 –Ῥαββι), which, we have seen, refers to a wisdom teacher. In the

redaction a voice from heaven calls Jesus God's son (Mk 9:7 – ὁ υἱός μου). Mark finds the idea that Jesus, *Messiah,* is the *Son of Man* in his source and to that he adds the messianic secret motif. The Marcan intention is that the pre-Easter Jesus, who was the wisdom sage who became a *Rabbi* and Jesus *Messiah, Son of Man* (in a more Judean context), should, furthermore, be seen as *Son of God* (in a more Gentile-Hellenistic context). However, this insight (that Jesus was also *Son of God*) was only visible to a few: "Jesus besitzt dieses bereits und läßt es nur vor seinen vertrauten Jüngern sichtbar werden" (Hahn 1974:312). The story about Jesus miraculously healing the menstruating woman (Mark 5:25-34) demonstrates his supernatural power (*übernatürlichen Kraft*). A similar tendency can also be seen in the epiphany of Jesus walking on the sea (Mt 14:33 par.).

3. A SYNOPSIS

The use of the title *Son of God* in the four canonical gospels can be summarized as follows (see Hahn 1974:317-319): Mark represents the oldest, but also the last layer of the tradition. The baptism of Jesus is understood as a type of "enthronement". The Spirit of God is present, which signifies the beginning of Jesus' public career. On the other hand later motifs can also be found in the Gospel of Mark, for example the "wesensmäßige Durchdringung durch den Gottesgeist" (cf the miracle story of the healing of the menstruating woman in Mk 5:25-34 and the report of Jesus' transfiguration in Mk 9:2-13).

Two themes are peculiar to Luke: the annunciation story refers to Jesus, born as *Son of God*, who fulfills a messianic role (see the expressions in Lk 1:26-27, 32-33) – as *Messiah* he is empowered at birth by the Spirit of God (cf Lk 1:35): "die bewirkenden Lebensmacht des Geistes" (Hahn 1974:318). However, the work of the Spirit in this regard does not mean a physical divine sonship of Jesus. Rather, the work of the Spirit is seen in a typical Judean-Hellenistic way, namely that the divine Spirit enables the "agents" of God, such as kings, prophets and messiahs, to fulfill their God-given calling. This can be seen clearly in the Lucan report of Jesus' baptism (cf Lk 3:22 – "... the Holy Spirit [τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον] descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased"). As the

Lucan narrative progresses Jesus' empowerment as a Spirit-filled *Messiah* can also be seen in Luke's report of the miracles stories (see Lk 11:14-26). "Vor allem hat Lukas den Gedanken der besonderen Geistausrüstung absichtsvoll weitergeführt" (Hahn 1974:318). The temptation story (Lk 4:1-13) is a pivotal point in the narrative. Here the Holy Spirit filled Jesus and led him into the desert to be tested. Jesus was tested whether he, as *Son of God*, would fulfill his calling as God's *Messiah*. The alternative Satan proposes is whether he would choose the role of a powerful king rather than that of God's Spirit-filled *Messiah*.

In Matthew the use of the triad formula (Mt 28:19) should be ascribed to a scribal (exegetical) activity that has its roots in the Jesus faction in Jerusalem. This Jesus tradition, however, was conflated with elements Matthew took over from the lastest recension of Q and from Mark. The title *Son of God* in Matthew emphasizes the transcendental authority of the *Messiah* and the *Son of Man*. Matthew's use of the title *Kyrios* should be understood in the same way. It simultaneously expresses an honorary title for Jesus as "teacher of the law of God" and the divine authority of his teaching. The first is rooted in a more Judean and the latter in a more Hellenistic context. The teaching element goes back (via Mark and Q) to the tradition that Jesus was a sage.

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