

Miszelle

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Theologische Zeitschrift**

Band (Jahr): **34 (1978)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **21.07.2024**

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Again Acts vii. 56: Son of Man?

In the *Theologische Zeitschrift* 21 (1965), p. 14, I published a brief note "Acts vii. 56: Son of Man?". It had as far as I can judge, a mixed reception, a reaction that does not surprise me. Since then I have been collecting additional evidence on the text and recently I had occasion to return to the argument with the following results.

First, more witnesses for "Son of God" have come to light so that now the list is as follows: *anthrōpou] theoû* P⁷⁴ 491 614; Macarius / Symeon (GCS i. 85. 5); Latin: *Vita Patricii*; Old Georgian; Coptic: 2 bohairic mss. Of these Macarius of about A.D. 400 is probably the oldest. I owe the information about the *Vita Patricii* to the *Vetus Latina Institut*, Beuron.

I suggested in my earlier note that the reason for the change from *theoû* to *anthrōpou* was to avoid four occurrences of *theoû* in verses 55–56. With the change the occurrences drop to three. It may be asked if this was the only instance of *theoû* which was eliminated. To this we can answer that there is one other change as follows: verse 55 *toû theoû autoû* C i *Theophyl* (b).

In support of this argument I appealed to our author's insensitiveness to repetition and quoted the following: "Acts i. 10 f. *eis tòn ouranón* 4 times; iv. 34 *hypêrchen* (v. l. *1ên*)... *hypêrchon*; vi. 7 f. *pístei*... *písteos* (v. l. *cháritis*); vii. 17 *epanggelías hês epēnggelato* (v. l. *ōmosen, hōmológēsēn*); vii. 49 *poion*... *poios* (v. l. *tís*); xiii. 22 f. *ēgeiren*... *ēgeiren* (v. l. *ēgagen*), Luke vii. 3 f. *ērōtōn*... *eroton* (v. l. *parekáloun*)." Another example is Acts xxii. 30 *ekéleusen*; xxiii. 2 *ekéleusen* (v. l. *epétazen, parēnggeilen*); v. 3 *keleúeis*. A more venial one is at viii. 36 *ho eunoûchos*; 37 *ho eunoûchos* (v. l.); 38 *ho eunoûchos*; 39 *tòn eunoûchon* (v. l.).

There is however one other consideration that may support this argument. Acts vii. 56 stands in relation to Luke xxii. 69 with its parallels Mark xiv. 62, Matt. xxvi. 64. The change from *theoû* to *anthrōpou* would make the parallel closer. There is other evidence that this assimilation of Acts vii. 56 to Luke xxii. 69 was being made in Antiquity. For "standing at the right hand of God" the rendering "standing at the right hand of the power of God" occurs in these Latin witnesses: *uirtutis dei* vg (W Mich), cp. *maiestatis* Aug. We may ask whether there is in Macarius / Symeon's Homilies. These homilies, as we have seen, had provided patristic evidence for *tòn hyiòn toû theoû*. They also provided in a later quotation evidence of a double assimilation: *tòn hyiòn toû anthrōpou* *Lestôta ek dexiôn tês dynámeōs* (GCS. i. 188. 10). In the same way Latin witnesses add *uirtutis* in vii. 55.

We have, then, two causes of change, assimilation and the avoidance of repetition, but can we explain how the author came to write *tòn hyiòn toû theoû* in the first place? We can at least provide part of an explanation by looking at Luke xxii. 69–70. At verse 69 we have *éstai ho hyiòs toû anthrōpou kathēmenos* etc. This is followed in verse 70 by the question, *Sy ouñ eî ho hyiòs toû theoû?* This makes our author identify Son of Man and Son of God, a significant point that is not always noticed. Consequently for him there would be no difficulty in principle in substituting Son of God for Son of Man. The change from "sitting" to "standing" is much more of a problem.

If our author identified the two terms, Son of Man and Son of God, we still have the question, why did he make the change? Insensitive as he is to features like repetition, he is very much aware of the connotations and contexts of words. It is this which helps to make him so effective a writer. He would know that *ho hyiòs toû anthrōpou* was not current outside the sayings of Jesus and in echoing Luke xxii. 69 at Acts vii. 56 would respect this substituting the phrase, equivalent for him, *ho hyiòs toû theoû*.

The consequences of this argument need no underlining. The term *ho hyiòs toû anthrōpou* is confined to the sayings of Jesus in the New Testament without exception. It is of course to be kept distinct from the LXX phrase *hyiòs anthrōpou* which has a different history and though it occurs elsewhere in the New Testament appears in the sayings of Jesus only at John v. 27.

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