exclusive) may be transcended in order that women would be included in the category of the normative (male) human-cum-heavenly being.[1] If we are to leave the notion of the normative male human or spiritual being behind as archaic, then perhaps we also need to question the normative maleness of humanity's heavenly representative, as indicated in Dan 7.13.

Still, we may here be straying too far into the realm of hermeneutics, which is of course not irrelevant in a discussion of translation, but should not overpower the discussion. Whatever translation is used for *ho huios tou anthrōpou*, the retention of the implicit Greek and underlying Aramaic references to both a child of humankind (and the first human being) and the "one like a member of the human race" (Dan 7.13) seems necessary. If in Daniel we choose to translate the Aramaic as "one like a human being" then the New Testament term should possibly be "the human being". If in Daniel we opt to preserve, with the Greek text, an Aramaism, "one like a son (child) of humankind", or "one like a member of the human race" we may possibly use in the New Testament the more literal "the son (child) of humankind" or "the member of the human race", though admittedly this does read as awkward. All that may be said here is that in Greek the expression reads as awkward also. There seems to be no good reason to avoid the awkwardness in an English translation. Therefore, my personal preference would be "the child of humankind".

In translating the phrase in this way, this is not at all meant to suggest that the historical Jesus always used this expression of himself in order to allude to Daniel 7, and accepted its usage concerning him, though it seems likely to me that a core group of sayings were preserved which contained this idiosyncratic usage. We may well conjecture that Jesus in fact also used the usual Aramaic circumlocution for "a human being" to refer either to himself or to someone else, or to people in general, and that this was later translated from some Aramaic sayings of the Jesus tradition into Greek in line with a developing understanding of any such term as being a reference to the figure of Daniel 7, that is, to Jesus himself who was believed to be that figure. These mistranslations were then added to the core group of sayings concerning the figure. An awareness of the possibility of these instances would then also need to be remembered by translators today.

At any rate, whatever improvements others may suggest to these preliminary remarks, I hope very much that we can dispense with the "Son of Man" as a convention. What was appropriate in the 17th century is surely not appropriate now.

PAUL ELLINGWORTH

TRANSLATING "THE SON OF MAN": A RESPONSE

The author is Editor of the Technical Papers series of *The Bible Translator*.

Dr Taylor has perceptively drawn attention to the inadequacy of the traditional translation "the Son of man", has suggested other options, and has invited further suggestions. She has also assessed and contributed to current discussion of the

1 *Gospel of Mary* 9.20; *Gospel of Thomas* 114. See for an interesting discussion, W.A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity", *History of Religions* 13 (1974) 165-208.

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac background of this expression. The present writer has no competence in this area, but would wish to support Dr Taylor's recommendations by some remarks related mainly to the New Testament usage of "Son of man", particularly in the Gospels.[1]

The phrase *ho huios tou anthrōpou* (occasionally *huios anthrōpou*), unnatural in Greek, is "a Semitic expression that typically individualizes a noun for humanity in general by prefacing it with 'son of,' thus designating a specific human being, a single member of the human species."[2] Even modern translations in major languages[3] have translated it literally in the Gospels.

The corresponding Hebrew and Aramaic expressions in Ezekiel and in Daniel are sometimes translated by more natural expressions: in Ezekiel "mortal man" (GNB), "O mortal" (NRSV), "O man" (REB)[4], but "son of man" in NIV and NJB; and in Dan 7.13 "a human being" (GNB, NRSV, REB)[5], but "a son of man" in NIV, NJB, and CEV[6]. *La Bible en français courant* consistently translates "Ezkiel" in Ezekiel, and is apparently followed by *La Bibbia in lingua corrente*'s "Ezechiele"; CEV tends to have "Ezekiel, son of man" at the beginning of sections of discourse, and simply "Ezekiel" in less prominent places. Two factors appear to have contributed to this variety of renderings: first, a general tendency towards either word-for-word or meaning-for-meaning translation; and second, a desire to allow the reader to make links with usage in the Gospels, influencing one or two versions to move in a more literal direction than they usually prefer to take.

Some translations give their intended readers additional help in understanding "the Son of man" in the Gospels. GNB has no footnote or Word List entry on the expression, but the forthcoming *Good News Study Bible* Word List has the following draft entry:

> **Son of Man** In Ezekiel (see 2.1n) the prophet is often addressed as "son of man" (GNB "mortal man") because in heaven he is seen as a human being representing other human beings. In NT times, on the basis of the vision in Dan 7.13-14, the Son of Man was expected to come from heaven and be given power to rule the world after the last judgement. In all the Gospels, Jesus speaks of the Son of Man as one who already has authority to judge and to forgive (Mk 2.28; Jn 5.27), but also as one who will give

1 T.B. Slater, "*Homoion huion anthrōpou* in Rev 1.13 and 14.14", *TBT* 44 (1993) 349f., suggests for these texts the translation "like *a* son of man". R.A. Bascom, "Recognising the otherness of the text: avoiding accommodation in translation", *TBT* 42 (1991) 314-325, here 317, attacks such translations as "I, the Man who came from Heaven" as over-emphasising the "messianic/Daniel aspects of the term", and comments that "the 'Son of Man' title was used by Jesus to avoid saying directly that he was the Messiah." A review of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* in *TBT* 44 (1993) 144-146, here 146, similarly "suggest[ed] that the title conveys more than the pronoun" I, and concluded: "Each occurrence must be assessed on its merits, but there is no clear escape yet from the traditional translation."

2 George W.E. Nickelsburg, "Son of Man", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, VI.137a-150a, here 137a.

3 GNB, NIV, NJB, NRSV, REB, CEV; compare French *Traduction œ cumnique de la Bible*, *La Bible en français courant* "le Fils de l'homme"; German revised Luther Bible, *Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch* "der Menschensohn"; Spanish *Dios habla hoy* "el Hijo del hombre"; Italian *La Bibbia in lingua corrente* "il Figlio dell'uomo"; Dutch *Groot nieuws Bijbel* "de Mensenzoon"; Danish 1992 official Bible "Menneskesønnen".

4 Similarly "Du Mensch" in *Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch*, "menneske" in the 1992 Danish Bible; "tú, hombre" (occasionally omitted) in *Dios habla hoy*.

5 Similarly "un homme" in *La Bible en français courant*, "ein Mensch" in *Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch*, "een mens" in *Groot nieuws Bijbel*; "un uomo" in *La Bibbia in lingua corrente*.

6 Similarly "mensenkind" in *Groot nieuws Bijbel*, "menneskesøn" in the 1992 Danish Bible; "un hijo de hombre" in *Dios habla hoy*.

> his life to set others free (Mk 10.45). In most if not all these texts, the Gospel writers understood Jesus to be speaking of himself. The title Son of Man is almost never used in the rest of the NT (Acts 7.56; see also Rev 1.13; 14.14), probably because it was not understood by Greek-speaking Christians.[1]

Such an entry is clearly more extensive than would be possible in most editions of the Bible intended for general use. It however typically combines some suggestions about the meaning of the expression with information about its usage in various contexts. There is no suggestion of an alternative translation of the expression itself; if the GNB translators had found one which they deemed generally acceptable, they would no doubt have used it in preference to the traditional, literal "Son of Man". CEV, which combines simplicity in translation with generous provision of reader's helps, has the following footnote on the first occurrence of "Ezekiel, son of man", in Ezek 2.1:

> The Hebrew text has "Son of man," which is often used in this book when the LORD speaks directly to Ezekiel. It means that Ezekiel is a mere human, yet he is the one the LORD has chosen to be his prophet who speaks for him to the people of Israel.

At Dan 7.13, CEV has the following note:

> *son of man*: Or "human." In Aramaic "son of man" may mean a human or even "oneself" ("I" or "me"). Jesus often used the phrase "the Son of Man" when referring to himself.

CEV has no footnote on occurrences of "the Son of Man" in the Gospels, but at the end of the Bible, a thematically arranged "Mini Dictionary for the Bible" contains in section 14, "God, Jesus, Angels" the following entry:

> ***Son of Man*** A title often used by Jesus to refer to himself. This title is also found in the Hebrew[2] text of Daniel 7.13 and Psalm 8.4, and God uses it numerous times in the book of Ezekiel to refer to Ezekiel.

It would, however, appear an over-simplification to translate "Son of Man" simply by "I" in the Gospels, or by "Ezekiel" in Ezekiel. If "Son of Man" had no additional overtones, it is difficult to understand why the more direct expressions were not used in the original Greek or Hebrew. In fact, Jesus frequently uses the emphatic *egō*, especially in John, but also in the other Gospels.

It is understandable that large areas of scholarly discussion about the Son of man are not mentioned in such notes, even in study editions of the Bible. They tend to be too complicated, too hypothetical, and/or too controversial to be briefly and comprehensibly presented to the intended readers. *La Biblia de estudio*, the study edition of *Dios habla hoy*, is exceptional in mentioning, in its note on Dan 7.13, the collective dimension of "son of man", whose kingdom includes the saints of the Most High.[3]

The core problem, however, remains unsolved, even by Dr Taylor's admirable study. It may be provisionally formulated as follows: given

1 Compare entry (64) in the *Biblia de Estudio*: "Según los evangelios, el título que Jesús prefería para referirse a su misión era el de *Hijo del hombre*, que, por una parte, expresaba su condición plenamenta humana y, por otra, aludía a su carácter de Juez glorificado."

2 In fact Aramaic.

3 Similar but more extensive notes on Dan 7.13 and Mt 8.20 are included in the so-called "Argentinian" Roman Catholic Bible entitled the *Libro del Pueblo de Dios*. I owe this information to Dr William Mitchell.

(a) that the original biblical expression carried a special religious significance, and was intended to be thus understood by its original receptors;

(b) that literal translations of *ho huios tou anthrōpou* are not generally understandable or are misleading to present-day receptors, unless additional explanation is given;

is there a better way of bridging this gap in understanding?

The question may be refined in two ways.

First, it is accepted by some translations, in our view rightly, that *ho huios tou anthrōpou* and the corresponding Old Testament expressions cannot and need not be translated uniformly. Here as elsewhere in dynamic/functional equivalence translations, as in sound exegesis, faithfulness to the meaning in the immediate context must have priority over meaning of the same or similar expressions in less closely related occurrences. But some degree of consistency in translating *ho huios tou anthrōpou* would seem desirable, at least as a heuristic starting point, in order to ensure that intertextual resonance is not lost.

Second, however, the first presupposition mentioned above may be questioned. Is *ho huios tou anthrōpou* in sayings attributed[1] to Jesus in fact intended to convey meaning? Is it not intended rather to evoke a sense of mystery, and stimulate reflection about who Jesus was? The question is legitimate, because it leads us to explore more deeply what is involved in conveying meaning; but the antithesis which it poses between meaning and mystery is too absolute. The situation may be compared to that of Jesus' parables. There is discussion within the Gospels themselves (notably Mk 4.10-12, 13, 34 and parallels) about the understanding of the parables; the subject is one aspect of the so-called "messianic secret" in Mark, about which scholars are still divided. It is fair to assume, however, that the parables were intended to convey meaning to at least some (perhaps an inner circle) of those who first heard them, even though the meaning may not always[2] have been immediately apparent, and was certainly not the kind of meaning which can be reduced to entirely informational propositions.

Similarly, perhaps, "Son of man" in the Gospels may have been used to refer indirectly to Jesus, conveying some meaning in the light of its Old Testament (and probably inter-testamental) connotations, but leading the hearers on towards further christological reflection. Once Christianity moved beyond the Jewish world, such connotations were lost; the hermeneutical strategy attributed to Jesus in the Gospels was no longer effective; so use of the expression itself was quickly abandoned. The connotations are also lost for most modern readers; yet the translator of the Gospels, unlike the writers of the New Testament epistles, does not have the option of replacing "Son of man" by totally different titles.

The question is therefore more complex than as we formulated it above. The translator's task is to convey (a) the semantic content of *ho huios tou anthrōpou* to readers who are not specialists in the Old Testament and the inter-testamental literature; (b) the allusiveness of the expression; (c) the inclusiveness of *anthrōpos*; and (d) the historical fact that Jesus was a man. In addition to all this, the translator

1 Like Dr Taylor, we do not enter into discussion of the authenticity of the different types of Son of man sayings in the Gospels, though it may be admitted that the question of intended meaningfulness may be answered differently in the case of sayings deemed authentic and inauthentic.

2 Though contrast Mt 21.25.

into many languages, including English, must (e) resolve the problem that while "Son" suggests maleness, "child" suggests immaturity, and "Son of man" suggests the human as opposed to the divine nature of Jesus.

In the usage of the Gospels, the first of these semantic components is not in focus; the second is obviously absent; and the third, though often stressed by later Christian writers, was almost certainly also absent from the Gospels themselves.[1] The translator's task is rendered still more difficult if (f) (s)he is working in a language community which has a well established Christian tradition, entailing a degree of linguistic conservatism which the translator may deplore, but does not have the power to override.[2]

It is not surprising, in the light of these cumulative difficulties, that most translators, even of meaning-oriented common language translations, opt for a traditional rendering, with or without some explanatory footnote or glossary entry. Exceptions mentioned (and in the first case rightly criticized) by Dr Taylor (101-102) are *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* edited by Robert J. Miller, and *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, edited by V.R. Gold and others. The latter's translation "the Human One" avoids these disadvantages, but perhaps under-translates in those contexts which speak of the messianic power and glorification of the Son of man.

It is far easier to criticize both old and new translations than to suggest any completely satisfactory alternative. Whatever translation is chosen, "a good deal of teaching must be undertaken if people are to understand the appropriate significance of the biblical title. However, the basic phrase should be such as not to suggest immediately an entirely wrong meaning."[3] These words were written more than a generation ago; the development of reader's helps and study Bibles since that time gives them added resonance today. But in the end, groups of translators must, as always, make their own decision, in the light of the resources of their receptor language, their socio-linguistic (including ecclesiological) situation, their intended readership, and the contexts of individual occurrences.

P.E

1 See for example C. Colpe, "ho huios tou anthrōpou", in *TDNT* VIII.400-477, especially 476-477.

2 The situation is different in language communities where a "language of Canaan" has not yet become established. In personal communications, Dr Ernst R. Wendland mentions as idiomatic ways of referring to a human being, such as the Swahili *mwananchi*, "child of the soil", and the Tonga *muntu-uulya-maila*, "a person who eats millet"; while Dr William Mitchell notes that 16th century priests in the Andes boldly translated the expression into Quechua as "child of Mary" or "child of the Virgin"! He also points out that in some areas of the Andes, the expression "son of man" (*runaq churin*) is used of a child whose father's identity is not known. See also the careful discussion, with further examples, in the UBS *Translator's Handbook on Matthew*, by B.M. Newman and P.C. Stine, 1988, 245-247; on Mark, by R.G. Bratcher and E.A. Nida, 1961, 81-82; on Luke, by J. Reiling and J.L. Swellengrebel, 1971; and on John, by B.M. Newman and E.A. Nida, 1980, 52f.

3 *Translator's Handbook on Mark*, 82.