

## The Prophet Daniel in the Septuagint: an “Historical” Sign of Both the Eschatological Son of Man and Ancient of Days (God Most High)?<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

At least a century before the Common Era, there existed in Septuagintal Daniel a paradigm of a human’s already signaling in Israel’s past the role of its God and God’s Viceroy in the future. Furthermore, continuing research into the Hellenization of the Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia increases the probability that Daniel could well have been read by Greek-speaking Jews not only in the Diaspora but also in the Galilee, Judaea, and in Jerusalem itself.

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The thesis of this short note is that, at least a century before the Common Era, there existed in Septuagintal Daniel a paradigm of a human’s already signaling in Israel’s past the role of its God and God’s Viceroy<sup>2</sup> in the future. Furthermore, continuing research into the Hellenization of the Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia increases the probability that Daniel could well have been read by Greek-speaking Jews not only in the Diaspora but also in the Galilee, Judaea, and in Jerusalem itself.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 I retain the gender-specific expression, “Son of Man,” since it has become something of a technical term—used as such in the extensive secondary literature. In context, the human in question is one of subordinate status or role, nothing being said about “nature” or gender. If I were to offer a translation, it would be something on the order of “child of dust.” See my “‘Son of Man’, ‘Pitiable Man’, ‘Rejected Man’: Equivalent Expressions in the Old Greek of Daniel,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 56.1 (2005): 43–60.
  - 2 Nothing in either the Aramaic or Greek text suggests that he is a redemptive figure. However, that he might reign is a natural inference, having been given a kingdom and authority. Benjamin Reynolds and others go farther in suggesting that, as king, [the] son of man is by implication a proto-messiah and son of God (with Ps 2:6–7 providing the backdrop for such associations). See “The ‘One Like a Son of Man’ According to the Old Greek of Daniel 7,13–14,” *Biblica* (2000): 77–78.
  - 3 See the extensive epigraphic evidence marshaled by Hannah M. Cotton, Werner Eck, *et al.*, eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Palaestinae et Iudaeae: Volume 1, Jerusalem, Part 1* (New York: de Gruyter, 2010), 1–704. Furthermore, the Theodotus synagogue inscription (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE) from the Ophel—the area between the City of David and the Temple Mount—provides dramatic evidence of reading and teaching the Law in Greek for pilgrims in the heart of the Old City itself. A photograph and edited text may be found in Jean-Baptiste Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum. Receuil*

In an earlier study, I had argued that the Seer of the Septuagint experiences himself a version of that which he envisions regarding one who resembled a [mere] human<sup>4</sup>—whether an individual or collective symbol is not germane to my point here. I attempted to show that *typical* vocabulary belongs to the following *narrative* pattern: a (1) superior (2) bestows upon an (3) inferior or subordinate the legacy of a (4) kingdom, (5) glory, and (6) authority. Such recitals occur within and among chapters 1–6 (where the agents are earthly and human as well as heavenly and divine) and between them and chapter 7 (dominated by two figures in heaven, one of them human-like).

In a subsequent essay,<sup>5</sup> I sought to demonstrate that Daniel in the “appended” *Bel et Draco* functions as an “historical” sign of the Ancient of Days or God Most High. By destroying the dragon of Babylon and demolishing Bel’s idol, the prophet anticipated locally and in the past that which God would do globally in the eschaton—according to certain prophets and sages. This action is prefigured earlier in the body of the text of Daniel itself by the destruction of the idol envisioned by Nebouchodonosor in ch. 2.<sup>6</sup>

Combining the results of this back-to-back research, I contend that there was available in the full Septuagintal translation of Daniel a ready-made, double-paradigm for adoption and adaptation by Jesus and the early Christians: a human’s signifying in “history” that which the future son of man figure would undergo and that which the eschatological Ancient of Days/God Most High would accomplish. That Jesus and his followers taught in Greek, at least on some occasions to certain audiences, would account for some of the son of man sayings that the developing tradition, both oral and written, subsequently appropriated.<sup>7</sup> Would it be going too

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*Des Inscriptions Juives Qui Vont Du IIIe Siècle Avant Jésus-Christ Au VIIe Siècle de Notre Ère*, vol. 2, Asie-Afrique (Rome: Pontificio Instituto di Archeologica Cristiana, 1952), #1404, 332–35. The inscription is discussed in Eric M. Meyers and Mark A. Chancery, *Alexander to Constantine. Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (v. 3; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 208–209.

- 4 “Daniel and the Three (Principally in the Old Greek): ‘Historical’ Signs of the Apocalyptic Son of Man and Saints of the Most High?—a Paradigm for Christology and Discipleship,” in *A Man of Many Parts: Essays in Honor of John Westerdale Bowker on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Eugene E. Lemcio (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 43–61. The full text of this essay can be accessed on Academia.edu, permission having been granted by the publisher.
- 5 “Daniel: an ‘Historical’ Sign of the Eschatological Ancient of Days/God Most High? Reading Bel et Draco in Eschatological Contexts: Apocalyptic (Daniel 2 and 7), Prophetic (Isaiah 27:1), and Sapiential (Wisdom of Solomon 14:11–14),” in *Orthodoxy and Orthopraxis: Essays in Tribute to Paul Livermore*, ed. Doug Cullum and J. Richard Middleton (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, forthcoming, 2018). Less securely, I have suggested in an excursus to the latter that Daniel’s role as judge in the “appended” *Susanna* also compares with the role of the Ancient of Days in chapter 7. Likewise, the full text of this essay can be accessed on Academia.edu, permission having been granted by the publisher.
- 6 In the work cited in n. 5, I observe that Daniel does not balk at the repentant king’s offering him the kind of ritual worship normally reserved for God alone. After falling on his face in obeisance (προσκυνεῖν), “he ordered that sacrifices and libations be made to him” (ἐπέταξε θυσίας καὶ σπονδὰς ποιῆσαι αὐτῷ). Θ, following the MT, does not contain the quoted statement.
- 7 In LXX Daniel, the prophet is subjected to the sentence of death three times: if the king’s dream

far to suggest that Jesus also appears in the Gospels as “Great Daniel’s Greater Son”?

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were not interpreted (2:12–13), when consigned to the lions by Darius (6:14–28), when consigned to the lions (under Cyrus, in Θ) by a crowd (Bel et Draco, 31–32). If associating this contextual motif with the experience of the son of man figure in ch. 7 is methodologically contestable, then other details warrant consideration. The appearance of v. 8c in the original vision of the OG (ἐποίησεν πόλεμον πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους) strengthens the association of the saints’ suffering with [the] son of man in vv. 13–14 since it creates a kind of *inclusio* with the fullest explanation of the initial dream in v. 21: πόλεμον συνιστάμενον πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους. According to the wording of v. 27 in the OG, ἔδωκε λαῷ ἁγίῳ ὑψίστου βασιλεῦσαι (“he gave to [the] holy people of [the] Most High to rule”), τοὺς ἁγίους in vv. 8c and 21 cannot refer to angelic beings. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that the LXX obliges us to understand the Aramaic in the same way. And there is the possibility (however probable) that the translator was using a different Semitic *Vorlage*. Collins, regarding v. 8c as an intrusion upon the dynamics of the vision, does not consider the possibility that a (literarily clumsy) *theological* motive could have been at work here. See John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 299, n. 199.