

*The Johannine Son of Man.* By Francis J. Moloney. Rome: LAS, 1976, xv + 265 pp., n. p. paper.

This book is a substantially unrevised doctoral dissertation submitted to Oxford University in the Trinity term of 1975. The work is scholarly, exhibiting good command of the material and mature judgment; yet it is also appealing in its unusual clarity and straightforward style.

Moloney complains that the Johannine "Son of man" texts have not been treated in any major monograph, certainly not one that attempts to synthesize a Johannine "Son of man" Christology based on the gospel as it has come down to us. There are numerous studies on proposed backgrounds to the title, on comparisons with synoptic usage, on the relation between the title and some isolated theme—but no major synthesis. Moloney's work is an attempt to plug that gap.

Following an introduction that competently surveys the literature, Moloney devotes chapters two to nine to a detailed examination of the crucial passages. The tenth and final chapter is a summarizing conclusion. Moloney holds that the "Son of man" references are neither synonymous with "Son" or "Son of God," nor are they isolated logia that have not really been well integrated into John's gospel. Rather, they are used to unfold successively that Jesus is the *incarnate* Logos, the one in whom God is supremely revealed, especially in the humiliation/exaltation of the cross. The Son of man is the one in whom the revelation of God and concomitant judgment of the world are uniquely located. Thus "Son of man" is both a Christological and a soteriological title and stands at the heart of Johannine theology.

It is always possible to disagree with an author on this or that exegetical conclusion. But rather than listing the places where I remain unconvinced by Moloney's argument, I prefer to mention here what is in my view the book's greatest strength—namely, his methodological approach. Moloney insists that, whatever the sources that be behind the fourth gospel, the text as we have it must have made sense to somebody at some time, or it would not be that way. Citing C. H. Dodd he argues that it is the interpreter's first task to interpret an ancient text as we find it, if it is at all possible to make sense of it in this manner. In each of chapters two through nine, Moloney seeks to outline the thematic flow of the argument (he calls this "structuralism," but his procedure is far removed from the left wing of the Arminian structuralists). In passage after passage his interpretation of the flow of the material is remarkably apt. Then, having established this flow, he interprets the "Son of man" saying within it. Such a procedure offers a refreshingly realistic approach to the interpretation of the fourth gospel.

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