

THE HELLENISTIC "DIVINE MAN"  
AND THE FIGURE OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS\*

WALTER L. LIEFELD

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
Deerfield, Illinois 60015

Students of the history of religion have long been aware of the similarity between certain aspects of the figure of Christ in the Gospel narratives and Hellenistic portrayals of apotheosized figures. These include extraordinarily gifted men, perhaps miracle workers, healers, or wise men, who are grouped under the general designation of *theios aner*, or "divine man." Attention has increasingly centered in the past several years on the *theios aner* as a type with which, it is alleged, Jesus was identified in some of the early sources of the Gospels. It is our purpose here to survey briefly some of the recent contributions to our knowledge of this figure, and then to suggest approaches to some of the issues raised with respect to the Gospels.

Out of the quest for Hellenistic origins of the Christian religion at the beginning of this century came the opinion that the figure of Jesus stands nearer to Hellenistic exemplars than to that of a Jewish Messiah. The title "Son of God" was considered to be of Hellenistic origin.<sup>1</sup> Fortification for this viewpoint came from the vast amount of material in Ludwig Bieler's two volume work, *Theios Aner*.<sup>2</sup> The first volume contains a mass of data arranged according to the characteristics attributed to the divine man. These include divine origin, typical course of life and fate, striking appearance, wisdom, courage, asceticism, power over nature and life, and leadership of men. In the second volume, Bieler cited various examples of divine men from ancient literature. He included Moses and other Old Testament figures described in Hellenistic literature. Bultmann, among others, built his Christology on the concept of the Hellenistic divine man.<sup>3</sup>

The last dozen years have seen renewed interest in the subject. In *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament* published in 1961, Hans

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1. R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen* (Leipzig: 1906) and G. P. Wetter, *Der Sohn Gottes* (1916) were influential in this respect among others. See bibliography under "huios" in Kittel TDNT, VIII, p. 334 and the section by W. von Maritz pp. 335-40. See also S. Morenz, "Sohn Gottes" in RCG3, VI, pp. 118f. and the section and bibliography by J. Schreiber pp. 119f.
2. (Vienna: Buchhandlung Oskar Hofels, 1935, 1936).
3. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 130ff.

Dieter Betz devoted a large portion of his study to the figure of the divine man, following the paths already laid out by Bieler.<sup>4</sup> The materials gathered about this figure were further applied by Dieter Georgi in *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief*.<sup>5</sup> He described those who exalted themselves against Paul as proudly displaying the characteristics of the *theios aner*.

In 1965 Moses Hadas, professor of Latin literature at Columbia University, and Morton Smith, of the Department of History at Columbia, produced an important work, *Heroes and Gods*.<sup>6</sup> It sets forth the concept of *aretalogy*, i.e. a recitation of the virtues of a hero, deity, or holy man in Hellenistic literature, and includes material from the New Testament as exemplary of this literary genre. In the same year Leander Keck discussed the concept of a divine man Christology in his article, "Mark 3:7-12 and Mark's Christology."<sup>7</sup> Next, Hans Dieter Betz further spelled out the implications of the figure as he saw it in terms of New Testament Christology in his essay, "Jesus as Divine Man."<sup>8</sup> Theodore Weeden dealt with the subject in "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel."<sup>9</sup> His work, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict*<sup>10</sup> is a full redactional study on which we shall comment below. A useful summary of the whole subject is to be found in Paul J. Achtemeier's article, "Gospel Miracle Tradition and the Divine Man."<sup>11</sup>

Morton Smith continued his work on the subject by assembling a vast amount of data in his article, "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, The Gospels and Jesus."<sup>12</sup> This is essential reading. It also contains links with his two recent works *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark*<sup>13</sup> and *The Secret Gospel*.<sup>14</sup> Smith has startled many, at least those unaware of his work and viewpoint, with his theory linking Jesus and magic. This is not unrelated, however, to his previous studies, as the obvious connection between magic, miracles and the *theios aner* would indicate. The relationship is seen when, following mention of the two allegedly magical rites of communion and baptism and a number of "minor traits of magical procedures," Smith proceeds to the form and content of the Gospel narratives themselves.

4. ("Texte und Untersuchungen" Vol. 76; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), especially pp. 100-43 on "göttlichen Menschen."
5. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964).
6. (New York: Columbia University Press). Hadas had previously written an essay on "Aretalogies and Martyrdoms" in his *Hellenistic Culture, Fusion and Diffusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 170-81. The term *theios aner* does not even appear there, and it is interesting to see how prominent it has since become.
7. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 84 (1965), pp. 341-58.
8. In F. Thomas Trotter, ed., *Jesus and the Historian*. Written in Honor of Ernest Cadman Colwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), pp. 114-33.
9. *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 59 (1968), 145-58.
10. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).
11. *Interpretation* 26 (1972), pp. 174-97.
12. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971), pp. 174-99.
13. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).
14. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

What really proves that Jesus practiced magic is the essential content of most of the major stories in the Gospels. . . . Like other ancient magicians he lived as a wandering preacher with a circle of disciples, but was distinguished from ordinary preachers by his miraculous powers.<sup>15</sup>

The subject is too vast for further comment here. While some of the flaws in Smith's arguments have already been pointed out by reviewers, his work demonstrates his control of the relevant Hellenistic literature. Like his "Prolegomena," it contains data and theories which must be considered.

This survey has touched on only a few of the works written on the *theios aner*. Others, including some significant applications of the concept in discussions of New Testament literature and theology, may be found throughout the bibliography to *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* by David Lenz Tiede.<sup>16</sup>

Only occasionally has any substantial work appeared to challenge the assumption that there is a coherent divine man type which lurks behind the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus. Otto Betz of Tübingen has devoted much study to the subject, and some of his insights are now available in an article on Markan Christology.<sup>17</sup> A challenge has also come from Tiede in the study just mentioned, which was given the honor of being the first thesis published in the new *Society of Biblical Literature* Dissertation Series. This is not a polemic against the concept, but it does present the relevant data in such a thorough careful manner that all *theios aner* theories must henceforth be judged by it.

#### APPROACH TO THE ISSUES

In this brief article, we can only suggest the directions which might be followed if we are to address ourselves honestly and competently to the issues. These issues may be summarized in two groups, those which revolve around the Hellenistic figure in question, and those which pertain to the figure of Jesus in the Gospels. Readers of this *Journal* will naturally be interested in the latter, but we must first ask whether there indeed is such an identifiable "type," or "figure" in antiquity as to allow meaningful conclusions about the relationship of the figure of Jesus to the *theios aner*.

If the Hellenistic divine man does exist, does he have a set of consistent characteristics so as to allow point for point comparison with the figure of Jesus in the various Gospel narratives? Further, can we select a few characteristics seen in, perhaps, a rabbi, philosophic missionary, miracle worker, hero (or in Jesus), and from these classify this person as a *theios aner*? Does Jesus' practice of healing, for example, sometimes with

15. *The Secret Gospel*, pp. 105-108.

16. *Society of Biblical Literature*, Dissertation Series, Number One, pp. 293-312.

17. "The Concept of the So-Called 'Divine Man' in Mark's Christology" in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren*, ed. by David Edward Aune. Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 33. (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 229-40.

the use of spittle (used by other miracle workers) or with words preserved in Aramiac (allegedly sounding like incantations) justify a *theios aner* image?<sup>18</sup> Without evaluating these alleged similarities at present, we may ask whether the concept of the Hellenistic divine man was so broad that almost any instance of extraordinary appearance or behavior could have been interpreted as indicating some kind of divinity. We must turn first, then, to the background data about the *theios aner*.

#### THE HELLENISTIC FIGURE

It should be kept in mind that pagan and Christian anthropology differed as to the concept of divinity. To the Greek mind man had the potentiality of rising to a semi-divine status.<sup>19</sup> Hence we are prepared to find instances in paganism of an ascription of deity to various figures. It should be recognized, however, that this was not always done seriously. Plato compared statesmen who failed to act wisely with popular soothsayers, calling them *theioi andres*.<sup>20</sup> Obviously the expression had to be current coin for it to be so used, but the point is that it was, already in Plato's time, being used *loosely*.

Conversely it was customary, especially in the period of the early church, to malign one's religious opponents through the use of such words as "sorcerer" (*goes*) and "magician" (*magos*) as well as "false prophet."<sup>21</sup> Taking *magos* as an example, as far back as Plato it is a synonym for "liar."<sup>22</sup> It is used by Philo, along with the word *sophistes*, to describe Moses' rivals in Egypt.<sup>23</sup> Any missionary of a new religion might be suspected of being a *magus*. A. D. Nock says of the charge in Acts 13:6 that Elymas was a *magus*, "It is perfectly probable that in such a context you mean by *magos* a man who might perfectly well be doing mumbo-jumbo even if you have not actually found him in the act."<sup>24</sup> Irenaeus used similar terminology against Marcus, who was "adept in magical impostures," and who "joining the bufooneries of Anaxilaus to the craftiness of the Magi, as they are called. . . is regarded by his senseless and cracked-

18. These are particularly applicable to Smith's image of the magician (*Secret Gospel*, p. 105).
19. In early Greek religion it was believed that certain men were elevated after death to the status of heroes. Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, Vol. I (Munchen: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2nd ed., 1955), pp. 184-91. Actually there were various types of heroes and they are to be distinguished both from the Roman emperors who were artificially "deified" and from the figures we are considering under the term *theios aner*. On the latter see H. D. Betz, "Jesus as Divine Man," p. 116.
20. *Meno* 99 B-D, cited in Tiede, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
21. *Treatise of Eusebius* 5; *Sanhedrin* 43a; *Clementine Recognitions* 1.58; Hippolytus, *Refutation of Heresies* iv.2, 15; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* i.13.1ff. and xiii.1ff. (The claim that Jesus was a magician is somewhat vitiated by the frequent malicious use of the term "magician" in ancient polemics.)
22. *Republic* ix.572c.
23. *De Vita Mosis* i.92.
24. A. D. Nock, "Paul and the Magus," *The Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. F. J. Roakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (New York: Macmillan Co., 1933), Part I, Vol. V, p. 164.

brain followers as working miracles by these means."<sup>25</sup> Such words leave sober theological dialogue behind and enter the category of sarcastic invective such as also characterized Lucian.

If such words can be used as pejoratives, we can assume correspondingly that complimentary terms, ascribing honor to the point of apotheosis, were freely ascribed to those who were held in awe. Even Paul was thought to be a god from heaven by some of his pagan contemporaries (Acts 14:11). Observe, though, that he was *not* called a *theios aner*.

This represents the kind of response which was common to the age. The same wonderful deed might be interpreted by some as a miracle and by others as magic. The performer of the deed might, therefore, be considered on one hand as *theios* and on the other as a *magus* or a *goes*.<sup>26</sup> This fact, and the variety of figures who were considered divine for different reasons (as we shall note again shortly) should guard us against making the facile assumption that there was a general type honored as a *theios aner*.

We should also note that the major figures who were considered divine men are so described in literature mainly after the time of Christ. While there is evidence, for example, that Apollonius of Tyana was revered by the end of the first century A.D., it is not until the third century that Philostratus wrote his glowing report of Apollonius' exploits. Likewise, perhaps our most useful array of material comes from Lucian of Samosata, who lived in the second century. Celsus, who described preachers who visit the army camps proclaiming themselves as "sons of God," flourished around A.D. 185.

#### FIGURES IN HELLENISTIC JUDAISM

Were the concept found only in paganism, the issues would be somewhat confined. Even characters in the Old Testament are described by Hellenistic writers in terms reminiscent of the divine man. Tiede has analyzed the material closely, and has pointed out that generally the writers who exalt the figure of Moses do so without stress on his performance of miracles. This is notably the case in both Philo and Josephus.<sup>27</sup> If the main point of comparison between Jesus and the Hellenistic *theios aner* is the performance of miracles, and if the figure of Moses is cited as a close parallel, it is of great significance that miracle working does *not* play a role in the reverence accorded Moses.

Next, we might observe that Philo, writing for a sophisticated Hellenistic and partially Stoic readership presents Moses as a sage. Where super-

25. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* i.131ff.; and xiii.1ff.: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), Vol. I.

26. This should be kept in mind when reading references in ancient literature to Jesus as a magician.

27. Tiede, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-37, 146, 195, 227, where a number of passages from Josephus, *Antiquities* Books 2-4 and Philo, *De Vita Mosis* are cited.

natural elements are included, it is to provide a contrast to the ancient Egyptian wonder workers. But if Moses was revered and virtually apotheosized as a sage, would this have been true of Jesus? The Gospel passages to which *theios aner* characteristics are ascribed are not those in which wisdom themes are discerned.

Moses is also revered as lawgiver, and it is in this connection that we find the strongest statement. In a bold apologetic passage against anti-semitism, Josephus speaks of Moses' sacred service before God, and asserts that "our lawgiver was a man of God (*theios aner*)."<sup>28</sup> The passage continues to speak also of his virtue (*arete*).<sup>29</sup>

We may now suggest a significant connection with an important passage in John. After Jesus is assailed with the words, "you make yourself God," he replies, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said you are gods?'" (John 10:34). Note the phrase, "written in your law" and the next words, "If he called them *gods* to whom the *word* of God came" (v. 35). The Old Testament passage cited (Ps. 82) has reference to the men who bore the responsibility of interpreting God's law as His regents, the judges of the people. Therefore, both in the Psalms and in John the most exalted terms are used to describe those who mediate the law of God. For Moses to be so described by Josephus is entirely in accordance with this principle, and need not be interpreted as an intrusion of a Hellenistic concept.<sup>30</sup>

Before leaving the relevant Jewish literature, I would like briefly to mention the figures of the rabbis. Morton Smith cites Neusner's multi-volume *History of the Jews in Babylonia*, "in which for the first time we have an extensive study of 'The Rabbi as a Holy Man' and of rabbinic thaumaturgy."<sup>31</sup> This is, indeed, an important topic, which has been rather neglected heretofore. Two significant points deserve mention. One is that this evidence is from Babylonia, not Palestine and, correlative, that it is largely late. In his summary tables Neusner lists 76 instances of supernatural activities associated with specific rabbis. Of these 19.6% occur in the period C.E. (A.D.) 220-265, another 19.6% in 265-310, and 60.5% between 310 and 350.<sup>32</sup> This kind of chronological data must be carefully noted, lest anyone try to cite the rabbinic thaumaturge as background to the first century Palestinian figure of Jesus.

The other point is that while presenting the magical and miraculous events surrounding the lives of some rabbis, Neusner asserts, "That is not to suggest that the rabbis thought of themselves as consubstantial with the divinity. They carefully preserved the distinction between the master

28. *Antiquities* 3.179-80.

29. *Ibid.* 3.187.

30. See also Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity. Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, Jacob Neusner, ed., Studies in the History of Religions, Vol. XIV (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 354-71.

31. "Prolegomena . . .," p. 195. The work cited is Vols. III and IV of *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* by Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968-70).

32. Neusner, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 391-402.

of Torah and the giver of Torah."<sup>33</sup> The significance of this is obvious.

The foregoing illustrates the nature of the issues associated with the background data. The figure of the divine man is diverse, and one must not assume that there was a uniform pre-Christian type.<sup>34</sup> It would not be appropriate to draw conclusions from such scattered examples as we have provided here, but some idea can be gained of the caution which is necessary lest facile comparisons be made with the figure of Jesus.

#### THE FIGURE OF JESUS

Let us suppose, to continue the discussion, that there was such a type fairly well defined by the time of Christ. Was Jesus considered a *theios aner*? The term, "divine man Christology" is frequently used in discussion of the Gospels. The issue is whether any of the sayings, narratives or other references to Jesus in the Gospels employed motifs common to the *theios aner*. If so, why and how did the Evangelists employ the sources in question? These issues must be faced, as they affect the study of the Gospels at every level. The following will illustrate:

*Form Criticism.* Dibelius and Bultmann categorized the Gospel materials in terms of Hellenistic literature. In similar fashion, H. D. Betz has listed a number of "pre-Synoptic pericopes" which he claims present Jesus as a *theios aner*, among them, nature miracles, healings, exorcisms and raisings of the dead.<sup>35</sup> This analysis follows predetermined criteria for *theios aner* motifs. From these early units, Betz postulates the development of each Gospel as it handles the forms and their theology. A more detailed study of a single pericope is found in the above-mentioned article by Leander Keck on Mark 3:7-12. Keck sees two strands of tradition, Palestinian and Hellenistic, an assumption which must now be subjected to the criticisms of I. Howard Marshall.<sup>36</sup> These words by Betz and Keck will serve as representative studies of tradition history and form criticism as these are affected by the *theios aner* concept.

*Redaction Criticism.* Several significant redactional studies give a major place to the divine man concept. For Keck the modification of the *theios aner* tradition in Mark was in the interests of his stress on the suffering of Jesus as Son of Man. Otherwise, the *theios aner* concept was useful to Mark as it conveyed the idea of Jesus' divinity.<sup>37</sup> Weeden, on the contrary, sees Mark as rejecting, not merely modifying, the *theios aner* tradition. He only incorporated these elements to correct the error and to refute the disciples who held it. Weeden asserts that this "*theios aner* position" was considered by Mark to be "an aberrant and insidious bastard-

33. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

34. Smith stresses the complexity of the material, though seeing a clear enough pattern to allow the conclusion that underlying Mark 1-10 is a collection of miracle stories which he types as "an aretology of the divine man." ("Prolegomena. . .," p. 197).

35. "Jesus as Divine Man," pp. 117-20.

36. "Palestinian and Hellenistic Christianity: Some Critical Comments," *New Testament Studies*, 19 (1973), pp. 271-87.

37. *Op. cit.*, pp. 352-58.

azation of the faith."<sup>38</sup> His theories obviously call for an extended evaluation not possible here.<sup>39</sup>

We can only note at this point that the assumption of an early tradition employing the *theios aner* motifs which, in turn, are considered foreign to the real Jesus, may lead one who attempts a redactional study to radical conclusions. This assumes also that Mark rejected the divine man concept, whereas Luke, using similar materials, is said to have adopted it. The pursuit of redactional study thus requires careful evaluation of the data which may be used as evidence of the theology supposedly characteristic of the various stages of tradition.<sup>40</sup>

*Literary Criticism.* Here we refer to the form, that is, the literary genre, of a "Gospel." The current trend in structural analysis is to view the form of literature as molded by its contents and, indeed, as part of the communication itself. It has commonly been thought that the Gospels are a unique form, unprecedented in ancient literature. Recent studies of aretalogy, however, suggest that the Gospels bear some of its characteristics, that is, the narration and praise of the deeds of a hero or *theios aner*.<sup>41</sup> If this is so, must it mean that the content as well as the form is affected, or could the form be chosen as a suitable vehicle to reach a Hellenistic audience? Further, is aretalogy a true parallel, or, if so, the only one? There are actually many genres which deserve consideration.<sup>42</sup> Dieter Georgi has proposed that "Mark consciously presents the record of Jesus in analogy to the philosopher-*vita*—still close enough to the aretalogical *vita* to compete with it."<sup>43</sup> Many would consider this too narrow a construction, but the similarities deserve attention.

*Historicity.* The matter of the historicity of the Gospel narratives is,

38. *Mark-Traditions in Conflict*, p. 147. It should be mentioned that one of the major problems to which Weeden's work is addressed is the seeming dullness and lack of faith of the disciples in Mark. This has been the subject of much discussion since Joseph Tyson's article, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark" (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, pp. 261-68. Other related issues include, of course, the contrasts in Mark between Jesus as miracle worker and Jesus in his suffering, and also the Messianic secret.
39. See the appraisal by Ralph P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), pp. 150-53. Martin acknowledges the realities of the redactional issues with which Weeden grapples, but is critical of his procedures and conclusions.
40. Among other considerations must be a distinction between theologically motivated redaction and that which is merely literary in nature. See Tim Schramm, *Der Markusstoff bei Lukas. Eine Literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
41. See especially M. Hadas and M. Smith, *op. cit.*; M. Smith, "Prolegomena . . ."; and James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 187-93.
42. See J. Arthur Baird, "Genre Analysis as a Method of Historical Criticism," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Literature*. One Hundred Eighth Annual Meeting, 1972, Vol. 2, pp. 385-412. Also note the following article in the *Proceedings* by William G. Doty, "The Concept of Genre in Literary Analysis," pp. 413-42 and the appended bibliography, pp. 443-48. Doty's views on genre are set forth also in his *Contemporary New Testament Interpretation* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969), pp. 257-321.
43. *Proceedings . . .* (see footnote 42), p. 527-42.

of course, related to the foregoing disciplines, but is not solely dependent on them. An example of the way a unit of the Gospel tradition can be dispossessed from its apparent historical setting in the life of Jesus and made to serve one's own "divine man" theory is seen in Weeden's treatment of the transfiguration. Going beyond the now familiar theory of a displaced resurrection story, he constructs a complex and clever history of the narrative (too involved to reproduce here), in which it is ultimately revised by Mark to be a polemic against the *theios aner* Christology.<sup>44</sup>

*Christology.* In presenting his concept of the way in which each Evangelist modified the *theios aner* theme to suit his own theology, H. D. Betz suggests that Matthew builds on a divine man Christology, not only differing from Mark but "*partly even contradicting his ideas*" (italics mine).<sup>45</sup> We have already noted that Weeden's work on Mark centers around the proposition that Mark opposed and corrected a divine man Christology which had reputedly been taught by the apostles themselves. Robinson and Koester's "trajectories" are composed of a plurality of elements which developed into diverse theologies, some even into heresies.<sup>46</sup>

The assumption contained in each of the above studies, that there is a *theios aner* strand (or collection) in the Gospels which is theologically at variance with other Christological constructions in the same literature, involves issues far beyond the limits of this paper. Nevertheless, one basic question must be raised here. If certain Gospel pericopes did contain motifs similar to those found in aretological literature. Would this mean that their portraits of Jesus were substantially altered to conform to other *theios aner* figures?

It would seem that several alternate possibilities present themselves:

- 1) Jesus bore little or no resemblance to *theioi andres* but there was a natural process of deification, in which his followers thought of him in terms of the popular image of the divine man.
- 2) The assumption of (1) is correct, but the process of deification was a conscious one, in which use was made of *theios aner* motifs as a means of propaganda.
- 3) Jesus actually did perform wonders, or pretended to do so, and exhibited other *theios aner* characteristics. Therefore, such motifs in the Gospel tradition are appropriate.
- 4) Jesus was God incarnate and did miracles, but his deeds and appearance bore little resemblance to those of popular *theios aner* figures. Therefore, the divine man motifs in the Gospels are inappropriate.

<sup>44</sup> For example, the voice from the cloud, before it was part of the Markan tradition, had as its function "to provide confirmation to the disciples that the *theios aner* Jesus transfigured before them was the Son of God." In Mark's creative hand, however, it becomes a reprimand to the disciples and a repudiation of their false *theios aner* Christology, *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>45</sup> "Jesus as Divine Man," p. 125.

<sup>46</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 10, 16.

- 5) Any of the above assumptions may be correct, but the mission of Jesus was so different from that of the *theioi andres* that the divine man motifs in the sources had to be suppressed.
- 6) The basic assumption of (4) is correct, but the terminology and narration in the Gospels are not really characterized by *theios aner* motifs. They only bear such similarities as would be unavoidable in the recounting of miracles, etc.
- 7) The assumption of (6) is correct with the modification that there was in fact no universal *theios aner* figure known to Jesus' contemporaries or to the Evangelists.

A choice between these alternatives will necessarily be made on several grounds. Theologically, certain ones will be favored by readers of this *Journal*. Some of the other alternatives are reminiscent of the issues of literary similarity raised by Bultmann, and we are well acquainted with the discussions which followed. The more recent redactional studies would take (5) particularly into account, as we have seen. Whether or not one chooses (7) will depend on his evaluation of the evidence for a developed pre-Christian *theios aner* type. One may hold that there were a variety of figures who were thought to possess supernatural abilities, but that up to the time of Christ they fell short of a defined image or type. Consequently the likelihood of their playing a role in early concepts of Jesus is reduced. Several of the alternatives could be adapted to such a premise.

This recognition of a variety of figures still allows the choice of (7) and, with it (6). Some might feel more at ease with that choice if (6) were modified to include use of narrative elements which were not "unavoidable," but consciously chosen to signal, in terms of contemporary convention, the superiority of Jesus over any rival claimants to deity. The summary formula in John 20:30 (stating that many more deeds remain unrecorded) is considered by some to have this use.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that we must work with both theological issues on one hand, and with literary and historical issues on the other. The next step is an intensive study of each Gospel, in which the specific data in question can be analyzed.<sup>48</sup> Redactional questions require this if any meaningful conclusions are to be reached. We anticipate the paper to be presented by William L. Lane at the 25th Anniversary Meeting of the E.T.S., "Theios Aner Christology and the Gospel of Mark."

This has been a programmatic essay, which has of necessity introduced issues and implied directions of study without giving full treatment to any one aspect of the topic. While urging caution against interpreting

47. Robinson and Koester, *op. cit.*, pp. 187f.

48. Some of the redactional assumptions related to, but not dependent on, a *theios aner* theory must also be challenged. To cite one example, Luke's use of "signs and wonders" is well grounded in the Old Testament and need not be part of a *theios aner* scheme as in Weeden, *Mark-Traditions in Conflict*, p. 75.

the Gospels against an assumed background of a Hellenistic *theios aner* concept, we must also beware of judging the entire matter of this alleged figure merely on the basis of its use or misuse in New Testament studies. Likewise we must not assume that there were no points of similarity between the figure of Jesus and other revered figures. Nor should we think that no one conceived of Jesus as divine in the Hellenistic sense of the term. Nevertheless, the foregoing data should help to guide the discussion by establishing certain parameters. Finally, the most obvious point may now be made: nowhere do the Gospels, either in postulated sources or final redaction, contain the term, *theios aner*. To minimize this striking omission, as does H. D. Betz,<sup>49</sup> may be an error comparable to the failure, in an earlier generation, to recognize that Paul's writings, allegedly influenced by the mystery religions, lacked some of the most important mystery terminology. Both terminology and motifs call for careful and continuing study.

49. "Jesus as Divine Man," p. 117.