

In a contribution to the *Festschrift* for Matthew Black published in 1969, A. J. B. Higgins posed the question: 'Is the Son of Man Problem Insoluble?' Undeterred by the somewhat negative conclusions of his own enquiry, he has returned to the problem in this recently published monograph. His essay ended with the suggestion that, though agreement may never be reached, perhaps 'the correct solution . . . already exists among the widely divergent ones . . . in this field'; it is clear from this latest study that Professor Higgins remains convinced that this 'solution' is indeed to be found in his earlier book, *Jesus and the Son of Man*, published in 1964. The present study offers no new theory, but is a defence and elaboration of his earlier work.

In the first 50 pages of this relatively short study, Higgins discusses what he regards as the most significant contributions to this particular debate in recent years – 'recent', that is, at the time when he was writing. His ms. seems to have been virtually complete five years ago, for an article by Barnabas Lindars published in 1976 had to be dealt with in an excursus, and the preface is dated 1977. He deals first with the question of whether or not there was 'a Son of man concept' in pre-Christian Jewish apocalyptic circles, and maintains that there was, though without producing any new arguments in its defence to counter those recently brought to support the opposite view. He then surveys recent work on the use of the phrase in the Synoptic gospels, before turning in the second part of the book to an investigation – and rejection – of Jeremias' claim that the oldest Son of man sayings are those which have no parallels. Higgins next tests the rival theories of Jeremias and Borsch, that where Son of man sayings have parallels which do not refer to the Son of man it is the latter (Jeremias) or the former (Borsch) which are the more primitive: his conclusion is that neither theory offers a valid

criterion of authenticity. His criticism of their suggestions is valid – there is no easy test for authenticity. Useful, also, is his discussion of the analysis of the sayings about 'the sign of Jonah' made by R. A. Edwards.

In the course of his discussion, Higgins rejects the authenticity of some of the sayings which he had accepted in his earlier book. At the end of the day, he is left with only Luke 12:8f and 11:29f. and perhaps Luke 17:24, 26 and 30, as the 'kernel' of authentic sayings, with possible echoes in three other passages. The 'kernel' sayings all come from 'Q', though they have parallels in other sources: their theme is the role of the Son of man in the future judgment. The sayings about the Son of man on earth, about his death and resurrection, and about his parousia, are all expressions of the Church's belief about Jesus. As used by Jesus himself, the term was not a self-designation, but an indication of the judicial role which he expected to play in the future.

One of the criticisms that Higgins makes of rival theories is that they are based on 'presuppositions'. Unfortunately he seems to be unaware that his own discussion of recent work and his analysis of the material are equally dependent on presuppositions. It is not unusual, to be told in such studies that "it is among the 'future' sayings alone that possibly authentic sayings about the Son of man in a messianic sense are to be sought": we might perhaps expect such a statement in the concluding pages. In fact, these words appear in the Introduction (p 2). The only Son of man sayings that are discussed are those which Higgins accepted as genuine in his earlier analysis, together with a few others for whose authenticity Jeremias or Borsch have argued. The assumption that there was a Son of man concept in Judaism for Jesus to take over is basic to Higgins' approach, and this is why he

defends this view in chapter I. But the evidence for the 'apocalyptic' view needs a better defence than this. Higgins admits that there are 'legitimate doubts' about using the Similitudes of Enoch as a source for the New Testament Son of man. But to rely on the evidence of the New Testament itself is to use a circular argument – especially since Higgins himself discards most of the 'apocalyptic' sayings and their imagery as creations of the Church. Where, then, is the evidence for this apocalyptic Son of man? In his earlier book, Higgins devoted one page to the discussion of 'Jewish Antecedents', and a further page to 'The Philological Question'. This time he devotes a whole chapter to these problems, but he has no answer to the doubts that have been raised about first-century expectations of an apocalyptic Son of man. It is arbitrary to single out these particular sayings about the future activity of the Son of man, and to assume that they alone can contain the key to Jesus' understanding,

without investigating the Jewish background far more thoroughly first.

Any reviewer who argues the case for widening the search inevitably demonstrates his or her presuppositions in the debate. But to narrow the field of enquiry in this way is legitimate only when we are certain that we have understood the first-century Jewish background. And when the unifying theme of the few sayings that are accepted as authentic sayings of Jesus is that of the future judgment to be exercised by the Son of man (a theme which seems to have been introduced into many of the remaining sayings at a later stage) one's doubts are increased. Like so many other studies in the field, this investigation proceeds by building hypothesis upon hypothesis. In spite of the confidence with which Professor Higgins presents his conclusions, we believe that he was on safer ground when he suggested that the problem was insoluble.

MORNA D HOOKER

AFRICA: THE CASE FOR AN AUXILIARY PRIESTHOOD by Raymond Hickey OSA.
Geoffrey Chapman, London 1980. £5.50.

Fr Hickey examines patiently and calmly the mismatch in sub-Saharan Africa between the statutory ministries offered by the church and the needs of the people. The sacrament of baptism based ministries of lector and acolyte are not much used because either lay people do the jobs already or extra-ordinary ministers suffice. The sacrament of order based ministry of the permanent diaconate is not a large success as there is uncertainty about its function, wariness about the 'no marriage after ordination' rule, fear that married deacons might be followed by married priests and the feeling that if a deacon can do little more than a catechist the diaconate does not go far enough to supply the great need which is for priests. The really successful ministry, barely recognised by the documents of authority, is the lay ministry of catechist.

The thesis of the book is that full eucharistic services are the right of every foun-

ded local church. Vatican II stands for this. A rapidly growing continental church where most people usually attend only a liturgy of the Word, perhaps followed by communion, seems to be a lack of full ecclesial expression. He argues against others who would tolerate a less than full eucharistic necessity and pleads for the priestly ordination of catechists who would be full-time auxiliary priests fulfilling their vocation in the local church. They would work under itinerant celibate seminary-trained priests, their animators and counsellors. Such a church would have both celibate and married priests. He counters with arguments three fears: it would create a second-class priesthood; it might open the way to schism; it is an expatriate solution to an african problem.

Despite proscription by Canon Law, catechists already preach. Fr Hickey comments, 'it calls for more skill and intelligence to prepare and preach a good sermon