

edition of Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*,¹⁸ in which he quoted statements from rabbinic writings and Targums from the 3rd and 4th centuries in which the term "that man" was used by someone with reference to himself (mostly, however, representing "man" by *gabra* instead of *enasha*) as alleged proof that in the Galilean Aramaic of the first century "son of man" was only a way of saying "I". Vermes summarized his view in his book, *Jesus the Jew* (London, 1973)¹⁹ and repeated a strong defense of it in his article, "The 'Son of Man' Debate" JSNT (1978) 19-32.

As mentioned above, "son of man" is occasionally used in the Old Testament with the simple meaning "man." Vermes largely bases his claim that it was commonly used as a substitute for the first person singular pronoun in the first century A. D. on a few occurrences of the term, or of the words "that man," in later rabbinic documents or in Targums. The relevance of his instances may be questioned because many of them use the word *gabra* rather than *enasha* and also because most of them are joined with a demonstrative, "that." Besides most of Vermes' alleged instances come from the third or fourth century, A. D., and their value as proof of a supposed first-century usage may be questioned.

A number of Vermes' instances are merely statements of a general nature with "a son of man" standing for "a man," -- even if application to the one speaking is intended. It is as if one of us, facing a difficult situation, were to say: "What's a man to do!" Such a quotation would hardly be acceptable as evidence that in American English "a man" is a common way of saying "I"!

Thus the many statements by recent critics that Jesus did not use "Son of Man" as a title prove to have no basis in solid fact.