CHAPTER NINE

THE TRANSLATION OF 1 ENOCH 70:1:
SOME METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

I

Chapters 70–71 of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch form a separate section at the end of the Parables of Enoch (chs. 37–71) in which Enoch’s ascent to heaven and identification as the Son of Man, apparently the individual whom Enoch had previously seen enthroned in heaven, are described. There are grounds for thinking that the passage was intended as an account of Enoch’s final translation to heaven at the end of his life, in contrast to the accounts of Enoch’s earlier, temporary, translations to heaven (14:8; 39:3), whose purpose was to carry up to God the petition of the Watchers and to receive a revelation of the secrets of the cosmos and of heaven.1 It seems quite likely that chs. 70–71 are secondary in comparison with the main body of the Parables, but as the Ethiopic text stands, they serve as a conclusion to the Parables, and there are allusions back both to the Parables2 and to the Book of Watchers (chs. 1–36).3 The text divides on formal grounds into two parts, a third person narrative, which gives a summary account of Enoch’s ascent (70:1–2), and an autobiographical report in which Enoch describes his ascent and identification as Son of Man (70:3–71:17).


3 Cf. 70:3–71:11 with 14:8–25.
According to the autobiographical report, the ascent occurred in three stages¹ (70:3–4; 71:1–4; 71:5–11), and in broad terms the description may be compared with the account of the ascent in 14:8–25, which also occurred in three stages (14:8–9, 10–14a, 14b–25). The language used in 70:3–71:11 is reminiscent of that used in 14:8–25, and in particular the house built of crystal and tongues of fire (71:5), from which the Head of Days emerges (71:10), recalls the description of the houses in 14:10–13, 15–17.

The climax of the autobiographical report comes in 71:14 in which Enoch is addressed—according to what seems to me the most natural understanding of the Ethiopic text—as follows:

> And he [or ‘that one’; var. ‘that angel’]⁵ came to me, and greeted me with his voice, and said to me, “You are the Son of Man who was born to righteousness,⁶ and righteousness remains (ḥadara) over you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not leave you.”

There seems little doubt that a deliberate link back is intended in this verse with the description of the Son of Man in 46:3: “This is the Son of Man who has righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells (ḥadara)”, and thus that Enoch himself is here identified with the figure whom he had seen enthroned next to God during his visionary journeys through the heavenly regions, the one who would act as the judge at the end of the age, who is called “Righteous One”,⁷ “Chosen One”,⁸ and “Messiah”⁹ as well as “Son of Man”.¹⁰ But the identification comes as something of a surprise, both because throughout the main body of the Parables (chs. 38–69) Enoch seems clearly to be distinguished from the heavenly figure he saw, the Chosen One/the Son of Man, and because, even within chs. 70–71, a clear distinction seems to be drawn in 70:1 between Enoch and the Son of Man. A number of different strategies have been adopted to deal with the apparent difficulty,¹¹ but

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¹ Cf. Caquot, “Remarques”, 114 (“par paliers”).

² There are no other significant variants in this passage apart from this.

³ This sentence could also be translated “You are a son of man [or “a man”] who was born to righteousness”. See further Caquot, “Remarques”, 115–18; Sigmund Mowinckel, He that Cometh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), 441–44.

⁴ See 38:2 (although the reading “righteousness” is perhaps to be preferred); 53:6.

⁵ See, e.g., 40:5; 45:3–4.

⁶ See 48:10; 52:4.
