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THE TITLE "SON OF MAN"

THIS title has excited great controversy, and all sorts of theories have been propounded to explain it. It is indeed, as Sanday says, a "comprehensive and deeply significant title".¹ Some theories must be brushed aside as inadequate. Baur and a host of others have advocated the idea that Jesus chose this title in order to point a sharp and clear contrast with the current Jewish ideas of the first century regarding the Messiah: such scholars assert that, in contrast with the Jewish expectation of a Messiah who would appear in resplendent majesty and glory, the title "Son of Man" always stresses the thought of Jesus as lowly and humble, as a Man, marked by human poverty and human limitations. Beyschlag has good reason for declaring roundly in his *New Testament Theology*² that those who so interpret this title "can, with any plausibility, appeal to not more than one saying of Jesus, namely, the familiar words, 'The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head'". There is far more in the title than merely an assertion of human lowliness and suffering and privation.

Others go further and affirm with Neander that "Jesus thus names the Ideal or Representative Man, as belonging to mankind—as One who in human nature has accomplished such great things for mankind—who is Man in the supreme sense, the sense corresponding to the idea—who makes real the ideal of humanity." Driver, in an article in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*,³ after a most thorough examination of all the evidence, comes to the conclusion that "the title designates Jesus as *the* man in whom human nature was most fully and deeply realized, and who was the most complete exponent of its capacities, warm and broad in His sympathies, ready to minister and suffer for others, sharing to the full the needs and deprivations which are the common lot of humanity, but conscious at the same time of the dignity and greatness of human nature, and designed ultimately to exalt it to unexampled majesty and glory."

It may be possible to arrive at a loftier connotation of the title, which includes within it all these ideas, while it also transcends them.

¹ Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, II, 623b.

² I, 61 (English Translation).

³ IV, 587b.

I

BASED ON DANIEL VII

The title is used in the Gospels by Jesus, and by Him alone, and it is found on His lips on some forty distinct occasions. When we study these, and group them together, the first thing that impresses us is this, that Jesus used the title, sometimes as speaking of lowliness and suffering and death, at other times as speaking of power and dignity and glory. It may appear strange that the title should have these two contrasted sides to it, but that will not appear quite so strange when we study it in the light of the Old Testament passage on which it is almost certainly based. That passage is Daniel vii. 13, 14: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the son of man (or, like a son of man) came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." When He stood before Caiaphas, Jesus was asked to tell whether He was the Christ, and He answered, "Thou hast said", or, as Moffatt translates, "Even so!" And, then, He proceeded to say, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."¹ The echo of the passage in Daniel is unmistakable. Previously, in the Eschatological Discourse, reported in Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., and Luke xxi., He had spoken of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and glory.² Some have gone so far as to maintain that it is a "fixed point"³ in New Testament study that it is to Daniel vii. that we must go for a clue to the meaning of the title, and there is a good deal of justification for that attitude. Dr. George F. Moore declares⁴ that "in eschatological contexts . . . the Son of Man is plainly the figure of Daniel's vision, and identified with the Messiah coming to judgment".

Jesus found Himself and His redeeming work announced and foreshadowed in the Old Testament. After His Resurrection, in the course of that country walk to Emmaus, He had that

¹ Matt. xxvi. 64; Mark xiv. 62; Luke xxii. 69.

² Matt. xxiv. 30; Mark xiii. 26; Luke xxi. 27.

³ Baldensperger said that so long ago as 1900, and his judgment still stands, one dares to affirm.

⁴ *Judaism*, pp. 335, 336.

wonderful talk with two of His disciples, in which, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27). The keys that unlock to us the hidden meaning of the Old Testament are all hanging from His girdle. The Old Testament is a sealed book to us, until we see it leading up to Him, until we find Him in it. He is there, for as Augustine said, "In the Old Testament He is latent, in the New Testament He is patent." All the parts of the Old Testament, as Flint¹ put it, "contribute, each in its place, to raise, sustain, and guide faith in the coming of a mysterious and mighty Saviour—a perfect Prophet, perfect Priest, and perfect King, such as Christ alone of all men can be supposed to have been", and, as Rainy says in his *Cunningham Lectures*,² "The footsteps of Christ coming are heard all along the way."

II

THE MEANING OF DANIEL VII

Jesus found in Daniel vii., for one thing, a prophetic foreshadowing of the real nature of His Kingdom. Denney says in his *Studies in Theology*, "Daniel's vision contains, in the briefest outline, a religious philosophy of history—a sketch of the rise and fall of powers in the world till the final sovereignty comes. The prophet sees four great beasts come up from the sea and reign in succession. What they have in common is that they *are* beasts—brutal, rapacious, destructive. But they have their day; the dominion they exercised is taken away from them, it is transferred—and here the vision culminates—to one like a son of man. The brute kingdoms are succeeded by a human kingdom, the dominion of selfishness and violence by the kingdom of reason and goodness; and this last is universal and everlasting."³ These are illuminating words, though they move too much in the realm of the abstract. The Old Testament does not look forward, primarily, to the triumph of ideas; it looks forward to the coming of a Person in whose Kingdom everything good will come into its own. And so, deeper insight reveals to us in Daniel vii. this Person, and we see him there as a Person whose home is the glory of the Divine presence, a Man standing close to "the light-girdled Throne of

¹ St. Giles Lecture (Edinburgh) on "Christianity in Relation to other Religions".

² p. 68.

³ Denney, *Studies in Theology*, 10th edn., p. 36.

the Ancient of Days", of Whom Paul says that He dwells in light that no man can approach unto.¹

A preferable interpretation of Daniel vii., therefore, would be such an interpretation as is given by Dr. D. M. McIntyre in his recently published book, *Christ the Lord*. Dr. McIntyre says: "Daniel had seen the giant forms of empire appear and pass, the kingdoms of the beasts. Those kingdoms were founded in crude ambition and were cemented with blood. Wars and rumours of wars, pillage, rapine, famine, pestilence, marked their progress. They were military monarchies, of the earth earthly. But as Daniel meditated on the vision another Kingdom came into view, represented not by a bestial form but by a Son of Man, standing in the splendour of the Ancient of Days and receiving from the Eternal Love a Kingdom of righteousness and peace: a Kingdom human and divine."²

In Daniel's vision the Son of Man is described as coming with (or, on) the clouds of heaven. It is always the Lord of heaven and earth who is represented in the Old Testament as appearing with, or on the clouds: none but the Lord of nature can ride on the clouds of heaven.³ "The traits which are insisted upon" in the representation of the Son of Man in Daniel vii., says Warfield, "are obviously distinctly superhuman or, as we should rather say, distinctly divine." The same writer declares that we have in Daniel vii. "a superhuman figure, a figure to whose superhuman character justice is not done until it is recognized as expressly divine".⁴ Thus, in Daniel vii., the Head of the Kingdom of God, that Kingdom to which the whole of the Old Testament looks forward, is revealed as belonging to the realm of the heavenly and the eternal.

III

THE DIVINE GLORY OF THE MESSIAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. B. Davidson says in his *Old Testament Prophecy*,⁵ "When we consider that Christianity is the issue of the prior Old Testament period, it is not improbable, it is rather to be expected, that hints should have been given even of its greatest mysteries."

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

² McIntyre, *Christ the Lord*, p. 47.

³ Hengstenberg, *Christology*, III, 83; cf. Driver, *in loc.*: "with the clouds of heaven: in superhuman majesty and state."

⁴ B. B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism*, pp. 42 and 46.

⁵ p. 359.

There are many hints in the Old Testament that the coming Messiah was to be of superhuman origin and character. Many attempts have been made, by Sir George Adam Smith¹ and others, to interpret the titles of "The Prince with the Four Names" in Isaiah ix. 6 as being devoid of all superhuman features, but all such attempts have seemingly insuperable difficulties to contend against. One of the titles is "the Mighty God", "EL GIBBOR", "The God-Hero". In the very next chapter of Isaiah x. 21, the very same expression is applied to Jehovah, and that passage "appears a very inconvenient obstacle"² to all attempts at weakening the import of the title, EL GIBBOR. As it has been put: "A Messiah who reigns 'without end' (Isaiah ix. 6), who is called the God-Hero and the Eternal One, who is the personal concentration of the spirit (Isaiah xi. 2ff), and destroys the wicked with the breath of his mouth (Isaiah xi. 4), is not 'purely human' but superhuman, wholly apart from this—that the kingdom over which he reigns is the miraculous kingdom of peace and righteousness, the splendour of which is the light of the benighted peoples (Isaiah ix. 1ff; xi. 7ff)."³

Other Old Testament passages may be mentioned. In Psalm xlv. 6, the Messiah, who in the second verse of the Psalm is described as "fairer than the children of men", and in the seventeenth verse is promised "praise for ever and ever", is addressed as "God". All attempts to lower the meaning of that invocation have only resulted in making a sorry jumble of the passage. The comments of Hengstenberg on this passage and on some other passages in the Psalms are still worthy of consideration. "In Psalm ii. 12, the Messiah is presented *simpliciter* as the Son of God, as He, confidence in whom brings salvation, whose wrath is perdition. In Psalm xlv. 6 He is named God, Elohim. In Psalm lxii. 5, 7, 17, eternity of dominion is ascribed to Him. In Psalm cx. 1, He at last appears as the Lord of the community of saints and of David himself, sitting at the right hand of the Almighty, and installed in the full enjoyment of Divine authority over heaven and earth."⁴ So, the passage in Daniel is not alone in hinting at the Divine origin and being of the Head of the Kingdom of God.

¹ *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 161; *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, I, 136, 137.

² Hengstenberg, *Christology*, II, 88.

³ Martin Bruckner, quoted in Warfield's *Christology and Criticism*, p. 33.

⁴ Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, E.T.III, appendix, in the essay "On the Doctrinal Matter of the Psalms".

IV

THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF JESUS

It seems plain enough that, when our Lord used the title "Son of Man" He meant to suggest the heavenly side of His Person. The self-consciousness of Jesus is an amazing, a unique fact that must have justice done to it. There does not seem to be any escape from the dilemma—either He was what he said He was, or He was the victim of blasphemous megalomania. He spoke as One conscious of a real pre-existence. It has, of course, often been argued that the pre-existence of which undoubtedly He spoke, is not more than an ideal pre-existence. Many have so argued, but perhaps none with more acuteness than Beyschlag. His ideas on this theme are set forth very clearly by A. B. Bruce, who, in his *Humiliation of Christ*, explains them as follows: "It is the pre-existence not of a real person, member of an eternally-existing Trinity, but of a divine idea, an idea which is at once the Ebenbild of God—a mirror in which God sees His own image reflected—and the Urbild of man, the archetypal thought according to which God made man, destined in the course of the ages to be realized as it had never been before, in all its pleromatic fulness, in Jesus Christ. And when Christ asserts His pre-existence, it is not as a recollection of a previous conscious life in the bosom of God, but simply as an inference from His own consciousness of unity in spirit with God. In proportion as it becomes clear to Him that He is in perfect harmony with God, and therefore realizes the ideal of a humanity made in God's image, it also becomes clear to Him that He must have pre-existed as an idea in the divine mind, and in the language of poetry or imagination may be said to have been in the bosom of the Father, holding delightful converse with Him throughout the ages before He was born into the world."¹

That kind of thing has for some minds an extraordinary fascination, but it utterly fails to do justice to all the facts of the self-consciousness of our Lord. Dr. James Stalker, in an article in *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*,² reminds us that Beyschlag "attacks the pre-existence with vigour, and displays remarkable ingenuity in explaining it of an ideal pre-existence in the mind and purpose of God. Thus, before God thought of Abraham, He was thinking of Jesus, who was anterior

¹ Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, 1889, p. 224.

² II, 657b.

and superior in the Divine plan." But, as Stalker goes on to say, "after the laborious analysis is over, these great sayings draw themselves together again and stare the reader in the face as a united and coherent aspect of the self-consciousness of Jesus". It was of a real pre-existence that Jesus spoke, when He spoke of Himself as One who had come down from heaven, as the Son of Man who was to ascend up where He was before.¹

That is in the Fourth Gospel, of course, but the Jesus of the Synoptics is as much a problem as the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel. In the Fourth Gospel we read that, at the close of His public ministry, Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God and went to God, but, in both Matthew and Luke we have those august words of His, spoken much earlier, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."² It has been said, with perfect accuracy, that "this short passage contains the whole Christology of the Fourth Gospel"³ Dr. P. T. Forsyth said that we have there "the Fourth Gospel *in nuce*". Dorner said: "Those who reject the Gospel of John on account of its glorifying of Christ, can hardly have set themselves in clear relations with the Synoptic Gospels."⁴ In the Synoptics Jesus makes claims on the souls and consciences of His followers which, one would think, none but God has a right to assert. "It is indeed remarkable," as Liddon points out so cogently, "that our Lord's most absolute and peremptory claims to rule over the affections and wills of men are recorded by the first and third, and not by the fourth evangelist. These royal rights over the human soul can be justified upon no plea of human relationships between teacher and learner, between child and elder, between master and servant, between friend and friend. If the title of Divinity is more explicitly put forward in St. John, the rights which imply it are insisted on in words recorded by the earlier Evangelists."⁵ In the Synoptics Jesus calmly announces that He is going to be the future Judge of all men. To quote again the incisive words of Liddon⁶: "He will proceed to discharge an office involving such spiritual insight, such discernment of the thoughts and intents of the heart of each one of the

¹ John iii. 13; vi. 33, 62.

² John xiii. 3; Matt. xi. 27; Luke x. 22.

³ Hastings' D.C.G., I, 362a.

⁴ Dorner, *Person of Christ*, I, pp. 60, 61.

⁵ Liddon, *Our Lord's Divinity*, 1868, p. 252.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 173, 174.

millions at His feet, such awful, unshared supremacy in the moral world, that the imagination recoils in sheer agony from the task of seriously contemplating the assumption of these duties by any created intelligence. He will draw a sharp trenchant line of eternal separation through the dense throng of all the assembled races and generations of men."

The problem of the Person of Jesus Christ is an insistent one. Dr. G. B. Stevens says in his *New Testament Theology*,¹ "It is open to the radical theologian to say that the positing of a metaphysical union with God, as the basis of the unique consciousness and character of Jesus, is a subsequent explanation which Paul and John have given. But it *is* an explanation, and the mere assertion that Jesus' consciousness was 'purely human' *is not*." It would appear that we are constrained by all the facts, and especially by our Lord's own words, to posit a metaphysical union between Him and God. To worship Jesus as One who possesses what has been called "the religious value of God", while all the time He may be a thoroughly humanitarian Jesus, is really to be guilty of idolatry. The cultured Modernists who, as their prayers and songs of praise would seem to indicate, worship a Jesus whom they believe to have been "purely human", are not much higher in the scale of logical being than the benighted savage who gives to a stick or a stone the "religious value" of God.

For John, as for the Synoptics, Bernard declares in the *International Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, "the Son of Man points always to the uniqueness and mystery of the personality of Jesus as One whose home is in Heaven".² We have sought to indicate some lines of proof that go to demonstrate that thesis. "Even," writes Dr. D. W. Forrest, "the saying, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head,' which Dr. Martineau (*Seat of Authority*, p. 338) takes as the typical expression of the lowliness connoted by the name, and which he uses to discredit the idea of authority or glory as also designated by it, practically derives all its point from the contrast it involves between an *implied* dignity and a *visible* humiliation. On Dr. Martineau's rendering the whole thing is reduced to a tautology: 'The sympathetic and lowly man has a lowly lot'."³

¹ pp. 63, 64.

² Bernard, I.C.C., "John", Introd. CXXX.

³ Forrest, *The Christ of History and Experience*, footnote, pp. 60, 61, 4th edn.

V

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TITLE

At the heart of the universe is a Man, in whose hands rest the destinies of the human race. The longing of the human heart,

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for : my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead !¹

is answered in Him. In the fulness of the times this Man appeared, not in the glory of Heaven but in the light of earth's common day, His feet walking along our highways rough, His lips drawing human breath, and some had eyes to see in Him the One Who, according to John iii. 14 and 16, is the Son of Man Who is also the Only Begotten Son of God, the Son Who, according to John i. 18, is "in the bosom of the Father".

Christ by highest Heaven adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord,

is now

Born that man no more may die ;
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

That is why He is on earth, to do for *man* a great work of redemption that no one else can do. That work will commit Him to shame, suffering and death. The title "Son of Man", while eloquent of heavenly glory, is one that suggests true humanity, and, therefore, one that can be associated with lowliness, shame, suffering and death. Thus Sanday is, no doubt, quite correct when he asserts that "at the centre it is broadly based upon an infinite sense of brotherhood with toiling and struggling humanity",² whom He has come to save. When, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus had been hailed as Messiah by Simon Peter, He began at once to teach His disciples regarding the true character of His Messianic work ; He began to declare "openly" (Mark viii. 32), and not in veiled figures or enigmatic sayings (John iii. 14, 15 ; John vi. *passim*), that He must through suffering and death come to His Throne and Kingdom. "He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark viii. 31). Soon after, in Galilee (Matt. xvii. 22), and, some

¹ Browning's "Saul".

² Hastings' D.B., II, 623b.

time after, as Jerusalem and the Cross were now looming near (Matt. xx. 18), He used the title "Son of Man" when speaking of His approaching sufferings. Later on, in the narrative of the events that immediately preceded the crucifixion, we find Him using the title in an impressive fashion : see Matt. xxvi. 2, 24, 45.

VI

THE MESSIANIC KING AND THE SUFFERING SERVANT

It has been argued by many writers that Jesus chose this title for Himself because it permitted the blending of the conception of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah with that of the Messianic King. "True," writes Dr. George P. Gould,¹ "there was nothing in Daniel's delineation of 'one like unto a son of man' to suggest such a blending, but there was also nothing to preclude it. Whether the coming of the heavenly Son of Man in glory, and for universal dominion, was to be preceded by a coming in humiliation and a re-ascension through suffering, the writer of Daniel did not tell. But what the prophet failed to disclose, Jesus revealed. He was indeed the Son of Man, whom Daniel beheld, but passing through a phase of existence anterior to that of which the seer had a glimpse, and a phase which none were anticipating."

That "phase", however, was foreshadowed in other Scriptures. What Daniel did not make clear other Scriptures had more than hinted at. Jesus could say (Mark ix. 12) that "it is written of the Son of Man that He must suffer many things and be set at nought", just because, in other parts of Scripture, the sufferings of Messiah are foreshadowed, and the Son of Man and the Person described in these passages, are one and the same Person. What Jesus meant to say in the words just quoted was this : "I, as Son of Man, am the Man of sorrows, Who was to be 'despised and rejected of men'" (Isaiah liii. 3). Peter, and the early Christians generally, saw in Jesus the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, as seems plain from the Greek of Acts iii. 13, 26; iv. 27, 30. The first Gospel quotes in chapter viii. from Isaiah liii., and in chapter xii. from Isaiah xlii., passages describing the Servant of Jehovah and applies them to Jesus. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus is reported as saying to the three disciples, "This that is

¹ Hastings' D.C.G., II, 664a.

written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors" (Luke xxii. 37, quoting from Isaiah liii. 12).

One of our Lord's sayings regarding His death, spoken as they were "in the way going up to Jerusalem" was this: "The Son of Man is not come to be served, but to be a servant (even the Servant of Whom Isaiah speaks), and (in accordance with Isaiah liii.) to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45).¹ He has come to achieve the redemption of man from sin, at the cost of His own life. Then, when His sufferings are over, He will enter into His glory.² We see Him now in the glory as the King of kings and the Lord of lords: we see Him more clearly than Daniel saw Him, and we can discern that

In His hands and feet are wound-prints,
And His side,

and that now there crowns Him "the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown",³ the crown of redeeming love. Thus we see, as Denney says, in referring to the ascriptions of praise to the Lamb in the Apocalypse, "redeeming love is the last reality in the universe, which all praise must exalt, and to which everything else must be subordinate."⁴

VII

THE PROTEVANGELIUM

The Son of Man does not appear in Daniel vii. as someone of whom no one has ever heard before. He is, as indicated already, the King to whose coming and whose Kingdom the Old Testament ever looks forward. How far back in the Old Testament can we trace the promise of His coming? Surely to the Protevangelium in Genesis iii. 15. "So soon as man . . ., forsaking the attitude of obedience to God, begins his self-seeking way, there comes also to manifestation the saving activity of God, directed to this apostasy of the creature."⁵ At the beginning of Genesis we have the first Man, and then, before his son Cain comes on the scene, mention is made of a

¹ With the "many" of Matt. xx. 28 and Mark x. 45, cf. the "many" of Isa. liii. 11, 12.

² Luke xxiv. 26.

³ Browning's "Saul".

⁴ Denney, *Death of Christ*, p. 246.

⁵ Dillmann, *in loc.*

Son of Man, who is called "The Seed of the woman": He will, at the cost of pain and suffering to himself, crush the serpent's head, and vanquish him utterly. This "Seed of the woman" is "The Second Man", who, as Paul tells us, is "of heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47, R.V.). Him we behold in the Son of Man of the Gospels, Who "for us men and our salvation" has come down from heaven, has become man, in order to take man's place of condemnation and to make atonement for sin, and "destroy the works of the devil". From the conflict with sin and Satan He has emerged victorious, although still, in the glory, He wears the scars of that mysterious and awful conflict.

VIII

SUMMING UP

It will appear, from all that has been written above, that the title "Son of Man" is fitted to suggest at one and the same time what 1 Peter i. 11 describes as "the sufferings of the Christ, and the glory that should follow". I have counted nineteen places, in the Gospels, in which the title is used in connection with the lowly or true humanity of Jesus, or in connection with His sufferings: I have counted fifteen passages where it is used in connection with His future glory as King and Judge. Dr. George Smeaton, in his treatise on *Our Lord's Doctrine of the Atonement*,¹ declares, with regard to the title, that "we shall find that it is not properly a title of dignity at all, though the latter idea is often mentioned in connection with it as a reward". In the light of the figures just given, that statement needs to be modified, for passages dealing with glory and power are nearly as numerous as those dealing with lowliness and suffering. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the title occurs seven times in Harnack's reconstruction of Q, four of these in passion or humiliation contexts, three of them in eschatological contexts.

There are one or two passages left over, which might, perhaps, be arranged in one or other of the classes indicated above, but which we take by themselves. These are Luke ix. 56, which describes the spirit of our Lord's mission, John i. 51, which asserts His unique place as the one Mediator between God and man, the true Ladder which joins earth to heaven, Matt. xiii. 37, which describes His agelong activity as the Head of the Kingdom

¹ 2nd edn., p. 111.

of God, who inspires and equips all workers for God, Matt. ix. 10 (with parallels in Mark and Luke), and Matt. xii. 8 (again with parallels), which assert His absolute authority as the Dispenser on earth of the blessings of salvation, and His right as the King of men to legislate for men. A. B. Bruce in his *Kingdom of God* maintains that, when Jesus says, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins," what He means is that "God is willing that it (the privilege of forgiving) should be exercised by all on earth in whom dwells His own spirit; and My right to forgive rests on this, that I am a sympathetic friend of the sinful, full of the grace and charity of heaven."¹ That looks very like a *reductio ad absurdum* of exegesis. Jesus in these words lays claim to a unique authority and a unique prerogative, and such a claim, in the last analysis, involves oneness with God, who alone can forgive sins.

This Son of Man, is, of course, the Ideal Man. He is not Son of Israel merely, or Son of David, but Son of *Man*. As Liddon expressed it, "Nothing local, transient, national, sectarian, dwarfs the proportions of His world-embracing character; He rises above the parentage, the blood, the narrow horizon which bounded, as it seemed, His human life; He is the Archetypal Man, in whose presence distinctions of race, intervals of ages, types of civilization, degrees of culture are as nothing."² He belongs neither to East nor West. He is the Son of Man. Or, as Westcott puts it, "He stands before us in unique, serene, unapproachable, acknowledged completeness, man purely and simply."³ He realizes the ideal of the eighth Psalm: we see not yet all things put under man, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says, after quoting from that Psalm, "but Jesus we already see wearing a crown of glory and honour because of His having suffered death."⁴ He has, by way of His vicarious, atoning Cross, come to His Throne, and, in His Kingdom, *man* is yet to come "to unexampled majesty and glory."⁵

Such ideas, we must admit, are in the title, but the loftier connotation for which we have sought to argue, includes all that. We might sum up our thesis in the words of Bernard, in his Introduction to his *Commentary on John*, in the International Critical Series⁶: "For Him it connoted all that 'Messiah'

¹ Bruce, *Kingdom of God*, 2nd edn., p. 174.

² Liddon, *Divinity of Our Lord*, p. 8.

³ Westcott, *The Victory of the Cross*, p. 46.

⁴ Heb. ii. 9 (Weymouth).

⁵ Driver, *ut supra*.

⁶ I, cxxxiii.

meant, and more, for it did not narrow His mission to men of one race only. It represented Him as the future Judge of men, and their present Deliverer, whose Kingdom must be established through suffering, and whose gift of life was only to become available through His Death."

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