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THE SON OF MAN AND THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

AN INTERESTING problem regarding the figure of the Son of Man in Daniel vii. 13 is raised by the Chigi text: *'Εθεώρων ἐν δράματι τῆς νυκτός καὶ ἰδοῦ, ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο, καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν.* Since *ὡς* is without accent and is followed by the nominative, the last four words must be understood to mean that the Son of Man was present in his capacity as Ancient of Days; the passage then runs: "I beheld in a night vision and lo! upon the clouds of heaven one came as a Son of Man, and as Ancient of Days he was present." This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the fact that the rule of the Most High God and that of the Son of Man are described in practically identical terms (compare Dan. vii. 14 with iv. 3, 34, vi. 26, and vii. 27).

In the Daniel passage this apparent identity between the Son of Man and the Ancient of Days may be accidental, but it seems remarkable that the writer of the Apocalypse in his opening vision has seen the implications of the words in Daniel and has deliberately underlined them, for he describes Christ, the Son of Man, in terms of the Ancient of Days: "His head and his hair were white as white wool" (Rev. i. 14). Thus the identity of the two figures in Daniel is made the basis for his doctrine of the unity of God and the Lamb.

However, let it be supposed that the identity in the Apocalypse is also accidental (the more readily since we do not know precisely what text of Daniel the writer had before him);¹ there is still another passage in the New Testament upon which the Chigi text of Daniel vii. 13 may throw some light, namely, the accusation of blasphemy in Mark xiv. 61-64: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy." It has often been pointed out that

¹ The quotations from Daniel often resemble Theodotion, who has *καὶ ἕως τοῦ παλαιοῦ τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔφθασε* in the passage in question. Unfortunately the evidence of the Chester Beatty papyrus of Daniel vii. is of no help, as there is a lacuna between verses 11 and 14. However, the Beatty papyrus confirms the general accuracy of the Chigi text.

according to the Mishna Tractate *Sanhedrin* vii. 5 the charge of blasphemy only applied to one who had expressly uttered the Name, and this our Lord did not do. Dr. Danby shows¹ that we can assume neither that we are given all the details of the Lord's trial, nor that a second-century document which embodies the views of the *Pharisaic* doctors of the law is good evidence for the conduct of a trial in the early part of the first century when the Sanhedrin was largely under the control of the *Sadducean* priesthood. We are probably on safer ground if we let the New Testament speak for itself and interpret the accusation at the trial in the light of the other New Testament passages in which the Jews accuse the Lord of blasphemy; cf. Mark ii. 1-12 = Matthew ix. 2-8 and Luke v. 18-26 (the healing of the man sick of the palsy); John v. 1-47 (by implication); John x. 22-39. If this is done, the fact emerges that in every case the grounds for the accusation are that the Lord has claimed identity of function, equality or unity with God, and in every case but one His reply to the charge is couched in words which suggest a claim to be the Son of Man of Daniel vii. For example, in Mark ii the charge that in claiming to forgive sins our Lord has usurped the Divine office is answered by the words "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power (*ἐξουσία*) on earth to forgive sins . . .", which may be compared with Daniel vii. 14. Similarly, in John v the Jews seek to kill the Lord because he "said that God was his own Father, making himself equal with God". The reply is again a claim that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, and has given Him this authority to execute judgment "because he is Son of Man", that is, the Son of Man of Daniel vii to whom judgment was committed.² (The allusion probably explains the omission of the article in John v. 27.)

These allusions, however, might be missed. Only at the trial is the allusion to the Daniel passage so clear and unmistakable that it cannot be overlooked.³ The objection that the Divine Name was not used thus becomes irrelevant—the accusation of blasphemy here as in other New Testament passages is on the grounds of a claim to be one with God. In the light of the implications of the Chigi text and the passage in the Apocalypse

¹ *Tractate Sanhedrin, Mishna and Tosephta*, Introduction, pp. ix. ff.

² Daniel vii. 10, 22.

³ The allusion in Mark xiii. 26 and parallels can be disregarded since it occurs in teaching given *privately* to disciples (Mark xiii. 3).

it would seem possible that in identifying himself with the Son of Man of Daniel vii our Lord was understood to have made such a claim.¹

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¹ [Another aspect of the question arises from the use of the plural "thrones" in Dan. vii. 13. If *thrones* were placed, for whom were they intended? One for the Ancient of Days, of course; that is the throne described as being like fiery flame, with wheels like burning fire. But what of the others? The true answer probably is that they were intended for the assessors of the Ancient of Days (cf. Rev. xx. 4 with Dan. vii. 22). But we have traces of a school of thought among the earlier rabbis which held that the plural "thrones" was used because there was a second throne set for the "one like a son of man". If Jesus' reply to the high priest was taken to mean that he claimed a throne, set specially for Himself, alongside that occupied by the Almighty, we can understand the immediate unanimity with which His words were construed as blasphemous.

The Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 38 b) preserves the account of a discussion on this subject, in the course of which Rabbi Akiba suggested that one throne was placed for the Ancient of Days Himself "and one for David"—meaning by "David" the Messiah, "great David's greater Son". This identification of the *bar enash* with the Messiah was no doubt an ancient and formerly respectable interpretation. But, because it was an interpretation which would obviously have commended itself to Christians as a confirmation of their belief, it had become unacceptable, and even blasphemous, to the Jewish doctors in general. Hence a vigorous protest was made when Akiba aired it: "How long will you profane the divine glory, Akiba?" See J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (1949), p. 186; and the highly important article by J. Bowman, "The Background of the term 'Son of Man'" in *The Expository Times* 59 (1947-8), pp. 283 ff. ED.]