

ON THE TITLE, "SON OF MAN."

A LITTLE work has recently appeared, *The First Three Gospels, their Origin and Relations*, by the Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter, the modest and unpretending form of which hardly does justice to the character of its contents. This is indeed the one thing that I should most regret about it. The book is addressed, in my opinion, to an inappropriate public. It is published in a series of "Biblical Manuals," under the auspices of the Sunday-school Association (Unitarian). It may therefore be inferred that it is intended for the young. And for the highest class of young pupils it is in many respects excellently fitted. It is written with a clearness of development and a flowing ease of style which draw on the reader and prevent his interest from flagging. There is just the right degree of warmth about it. It is elevated in tone, without being stilted or rhetorical. Even one who does not sympathize with the author's point of view, and who cannot profess to be indifferent to his conclusions, will find them presented with as little unnecessary friction and aggressiveness as possible.

These are considerable merits, and the author is fully entitled to the credit of them. The drawbacks are: First, as I have said, that the book is addressed to a wrong public. Books for the young are not the proper field for critical experiment. They should be confined to ascertained and acknowledged fact. Theories which depend upon critical premisses should first be threshed out in the schools before they are taken down into the highways and hedges. They should first be propounded in a form in which they can be adequately discussed and tested. The writer should have before his eyes the wholesome knowledge that he is writing for scholars who will not allow his statements and theories to pass unquestioned. It seems to me that Mr. Carpenter's book has distinctly suffered from the fact that this has not

been the case. Much of it is not really suited to the young, and if it had been submitted in the first instance to those for whom it is suited, it would, I think, have been written differently.

This is the second qualification that I should have to make in regard to it, that it looks at first sight critical in a higher sense than it really is. I do not refer merely to certain unguarded expressions, such as on p. 115, where it is assumed without a hint of doubt that the last words of Mark i. 1, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God]," are an interpolation, although they are wanting only in a single uncial MS. (N), and although their omission (supposing them to be genuine) might be due to one of the commonest of accidents. I do not say that the omission has nothing to be said for it; but the right verdict is doubtless that of Drs. Westcott and Hort, that "neither reading can be safely rejected." It is a more serious matter when we find a sentence like this on the fourth Gospel: "The rich background of nature and society, the variety of occupations, the manifold touches which reveal the teacher's close and loving observation of his countrymen, are merged in a few great and universal ideas, *in whose glow all local colour has been blanched away.*" The first orthodox commentary on the Gospel that is taken up—Dr. Westcott's or Dr. Plummer's—will show that this is the very reverse of the fact.¹ The fourth Gospel is really full of local colour, and to deny this is to give a wholly misleading aspect to the evidence on one of the most fundamental questions.

The synoptic Gospels are less dangerous ground, and Mr. Carpenter gives a critical analysis of these to which little exception can be taken. His last three chapters are indeed a welcome sign of the progress which is being made towards agreement on this head. The Gospel of St. Mark is placed

¹ *Speaker's Commentary*, p. v ff.; *Camb. Greek Test.*, p. xxvii ff.

about the year 70 A.D., and that of St. Luke some ten years later, both very probable dates. And if there is a tendency to bring too far down the latest touches in the Gospel which bears the name of St. Matthew, it is acknowledged that the mass of the materials of which it is composed are older. The whole of this part of the case is stated with moderation, and I should myself feel that it would not be difficult to arrive at an understanding about it. It is however rather strange, and perhaps not without significance, that the chapters dealing with this side of the subject are the last in the book. They come in rather as an ornamental appendage to the reconstruction of the history than as the foundation on which it is based. And accordingly we find that the critical determination of the sources has had less to do with the main body of the book than might have been expected. It needs, in fact, little reading between the lines to see that certain dominant ideas are present to the mind of the author throughout, and that his decision on particular points is far more affected by them than by any strictly objective documentary standard. There looms before him a dim ideal of what he conceives that the Christ ought to be; and if the Gospels do not of themselves yield exactly that ideal, they must be corrected into accordance with it.

This is to me another disappointing feature in the book. It claims to be critical, and it uses a critical language; but when it comes to be looked into, the criticism will be found to be far more subjective than objective. And, as a consequence, it will satisfy the author himself, and those of his own way of thinking, more than others who differ from him. An example may be seen in the appendix dealing with the title "Son of Man," which contains the central and distinctive idea towards which a great part of the volume may be said to be working. The treatment of this title is, to the best of my belief, new and original; and although I

cannot regard it as at all tenable, it may yet seem to deserve some closer examination.

Mr. Carpenter's idea is, briefly stated, this: He thinks that our Lord did not really use the title in the sense attributed to it in the Gospels. He would link on the actual use to the context in which it originally occurs in the book of Daniel. It will be remembered that the first instance in which the phrase occurs in any exceptional sense is in connexion with the vision of the four great monarchies: the first represented by a lion; the second, by a bear; the third, by a leopard; the fourth, by a monster with iron teeth and ten horns. The Ancient of days takes his seat upon the throne of judgment; the last of the beasts is destroyed, and the others deposed; and there comes with the clouds one "like unto a son of man," who is brought before the Ancient of days, and receives a dominion which is universal and eternal.¹ There is some little divergence in the interpretation, especially of the second of these symbolical creatures; still there is no doubt that they stand for a succession of monarchies, according to the most common view, the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Macedonian, or the empire of Alexander and his successors. In contrast with these, the Form "like a son of man" represents, no doubt, in its primary significance, and in the horizon of the prophet, the idealized, regenerated, purified Israel. From a Christian point of view it is not wrongly transferred to Him who embodied and fulfilled the ideal vocation of Israel.

Mr. Carpenter however—quite reasonably from his standpoint—adheres to the primary application to a regenerated Israel. He thinks that the use in the Gospels grew directly out of this. The "Coming of the Son of Man" he takes to be a synonym for the triumph of "the kingdom," that great social change and renovation to which there can be

¹ Dan. vii. 1-14.

no doubt that Jesus looked forward. In more than one passage the equation is found in the Gospels, "Coming of the Son of Man," = "coming of the kingdom" (*e.g.* in Mark ix. 1 = Luke ix. 27 = Matt. xvi. 28). These passages Mr. Carpenter takes as a key to the explanation of the rest; and he skilfully works out the view that, wherever personality is ascribed to the Son of Man, this is due to a misunderstanding of the real teaching of Jesus. What He said impersonally the Church, at a very early date, understood personally. Starting from the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, His disciples soon came to refer what was meant for the Messianic people to the Messiah Himself. Hence the existence of a number of passages in the Gospels in which Jesus is made to speak of Himself when in point of fact He did not do so; hence in particular the appropriation of a large group of sayings in which mention is made of the "Coming of the Son of Man," from the inauguration of an age of righteousness, or coming of a righteous people, to the personal coming, or Second Coming, as we are in the habit of calling it, of the Messiah.

I have said that this hypothesis is skilfully worked out, but I do not for a moment believe that it is true. It involves, as will be seen at once, a wholesale rewriting of the Gospels. It is no doubt the case that there is one important group of passages in which the title "Son of Man" is specially connected with this future or Second Coming. There is no great difficulty in re-interpreting these in the sense desired. But there is also a number of other passages which are broken up entirely by the attempt to force any such meaning upon them. These have to be got rid of by less legitimate methods.

No very great straining is indeed involved in the explanation of the question in Matthew xvi. 13 ("Who do men say that the Son of Man is?") as a simple periphrasis for "that I am" which is found in the other two Gospels. Nor is

it in itself difficult to account by this expedient for the occurrence of the phrase in the predictions of the passion, although the persistent way in which it is repeated on all the four occasions where these predictions are uttered (St. Mark viii. 31, ix. 9, 12, 31, x. 33) cannot fail to arrest attention and arouse some misgiving.

Mr. Carpenter does not allow that these predictions were so precise as they are made to be. He thinks that Jesus knew the risks He was running, and that He deliberately faced them; but the definite predictions he would explain rather as "the Church's apology for Messiah's death. The stumbling-block of a crucified Christ was removed if it could be shown that he had himself predicted his end in conformity with ancient prophecy."¹ But then he goes on to attribute a delicate tact to those who first gave shape to the traditions, which makes a larger demand upon our opinion of them.

"But why should Messiah be here designated 'Son of Man'? Because in the formation of the tradition the language assigned to Jesus accommodated itself to his historic utterances. Now the synoptic Gospels never represent him as designating himself as the Messiah. He does not repudiate the title when it is offered him, but he carefully refrains from assuming it; the official designation is never on his lips. It was impossible then that the Church should exhibit Jesus as habitually employing a name which he carefully avoided; and the Messianic feeling therefore had to embody itself in some other term which could find a sanction in his own practice. Such a term was ready in the name 'Son of Man,' which had been employed by Jesus to describe the immediate advent of the 'kingdom' in which God's will should be done on earth as it was in heaven."²

I leave it to the reader to say how far a procedure of this kind—at once so bold in its recasting of one set of facts and so sensitive and scrupulous in its regard for another—was probable in the circles in which the Christian tradition was formed in the middle of the first century.

But however this may be, there are other cases which are

¹ *The Synoptic Gospels, etc.*, p. 374.

² *Ibid.*

more intractable. One such comes early in the synoptic narrative, and is deeply seated in the triple tradition. In the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum our Lord pronounces an absolution over the sick man and then heals him, claiming the right to forgive sins as the "Son of Man." Mr. Carpenter objects to this that it "involves the conception of a causal connexion between the sin and the disease which it is difficult to believe that Jesus really entertained," and that it is contrary to the view implied in His question about the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell.¹ But is there no connexion between sin and disease? Is there any reason why there should not have been such a connexion in this particular case? The catastrophe at Siloam is not parallel. A further objection is, that the part about the forgiveness of sins comes in as a parenthesis. It is a parenthesis (in St. Mark) of some six verses, and is found, as we have seen, with remarkable closeness of language in the other synoptics. It therefore goes back as far as the documents can take us, and clearly belonged to their common original. Incidents like this are needed to sustain the charge of blasphemy; and the mere fact that one part of a narrative is separable from the rest by no means proves that it ought to be separated.

Another example follows soon after this. Our Lord supports the act of His disciples in plucking the ears of corn, not only by the precedent of Abiathar, but also by laying down the principle that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," to which, according to St. Mark, He adds the further corollary, "so that the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." A natural and appropriate climax, say we, to whom the title "Son of Man" presents no difficulties: "exceedingly unsatisfactory" is Mr. Carpenter's verdict; but the difficulty in his eyes is clearly not critical, but dogmatic.

¹ Page 378.

It is not surprising that the passages against which a criticism of this kind is directed are many of them those which Christendom specially values.

"Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your servant : and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 43-45).

It is observed upon this that, while St. Matthew is in almost complete verbal agreement with St. Mark, he introduces

"the saying about the Son of Man with 'even as' instead of 'for.' But the very fact that the phrase receives this introduction¹ awakes the suspicion that we are presented rather with a comment or reflection of the narrator than with a word from Jesus ; and it contains a reference to the mystic efficacy of his death which shows at once what is the significance of the name 'Son of Man,' and appears to be due rather to the interpretation of the Church than to the word of the teacher. The equivalent in the third Gospel, Luke xxii. 27, 'I am among you as he that serveth [ministereth],' is much more direct."

According to the critical analysis, the presence of a phrase in two out of the three authorities decides its claim to acceptance as representing the common original of all three. Mr. Carpenter himself appears to recognise this principle ;² but he ignores it altogether when it comes into collision with what he considers *à priori* probability, *i.e.* with anything that favours the thesis which he aims at proving.

No better foundation seems to underlie the rejection of Luke xix. 10, the commendation of Zacchæus : "To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

It is admitted that it cannot be proved, but at the same time suggested as "not improbable, that some original utter-

¹ The ancients were less careful than we are in preserving causal connexions. For instance, in the Latin versions *enim* and *autem* are frequently treated, as almost interchangeable.

² Pages 264, 266.

ance of Jesus has been cast by the Church into this form, and that the phrase has grown out of the effort to portray Messiah as the world's redeeming power, the Saviour even of the lowest of mankind." We cannot help asking, Whence came that effort? It certainly was not prompted by the current Jewish conception of the Messiah; and it can hardly have been derived from any other source than the teaching of Jesus Himself.

There is more that is attractive in the acute observation that the mention of blasphemy "against the Son of Man" in Luke xii. 10 (= Matt. xii. 32) may possibly have arisen from misreading of an original which had the "sons of men" ("all their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men"), as in the parallel context of St. Mark. But here we have again the agreement of two of the synoptic columns against the third; so that we should have to believe that the same misreading lay behind each. And if there is a questionable element in the passage about the sign of Jonah (Matt. xii. 40 = Luke xi. 30), that element is contained, not in the allusion to the Son of Man ("so shall the Son of Man be [a sign to this generation]"), which is common to both accounts, but rather in the expansion of this which is found in St. Matthew.

It will have been seen that too many of the examples quoted above are not only not suggested by the critical analysis, but directly opposed to it. The temptation has been too strong to choose, not that form of a saying which approves itself as most original, but that which lends the most support to the hypothesis which is being advocated. Mr. Carpenter, I cannot but think, has been progressing too fast. He has formed his theories too soon, and allowed them to mix themselves with his statement of the facts. I can only see in the result a confirmation of what I have long held, that in order to get at any sound conclusion about the synoptic Gospels we need to execute a "self-

denying ordinance," and for some sufficient period of time exclude all theories of this higher sort, involving the supernatural, whether in the way of affirmation or of denial; and that we should confine ourselves strictly to the critical problem of ascertaining what is the absolutely earliest form of the tradition, and by what steps and gradations other later forms are built up round it. We have Mr. Rushbrooke's *Synopticon*, but we have not yet that series of close and minute studies for which it ought to furnish the text. And pending the prosecution of those studies, I would respectfully invite the authors of "biblical manuals" such as that of which I am speaking to think twice before they engage in what may be a spreading broadcast of error.

It must not however be supposed that my sole objection to the particular theory before us is that it involves the re-writing—and the premature re-writing—of the Gospels. Another group of reasons, historical rather than critical, tells in the same direction. There is one marked omission in Mr. Carpenter's argument. He says nothing (in this connexion) of the Book of Enoch. Probably the simplest interpretation of this silence is that he sets down the passages implicated as of Christian origin. The view is that of a minority of critics: still it is held by Dr. Drummond in his *Jewish Messiah*; and I can quite understand his colleague sharing the opinion. The point is however important, not to say vital, in its bearing upon the whole question. Perhaps this is another instance in which the exigences of a school manual have interfered with the proper scientific discussion of a problem which demands science. If the so called "parables" in the Book of Enoch are pre-Christian, then the whole conditions of the problem are different. In that case it cannot be questioned that the title "Son of Man" was already applied, before Jesus used it, to the personal Messiah. Here for instance is a passage which excludes all doubt upon the subject:

"There I saw One who had a head of days [*i.e.* was old], and His head was white like wool; and with Him was a Second, whose countenance was like the appearance of a man, and His countenance was full of grace, like one of the holy angels. And I asked one of the angels who were with me, and who showed me all the secrets, concerning this Son of Man, who He was and whence He was, and why He goes with the Head of days. And he answered and said to me: This is the Son of Man who has justice, and justice dwells with Him; and all the treasures of secrecy He reveals, because the Lord of the spirits has chosen Him, and His portion overcomes all things before the Lord of the spirits in rectitude to eternity. And this Son of Man, whom thou hast seen, will arouse the kings and mighty from their couches, and the strong from their thrones, and will loosen the bands of the strong, and will break the teeth of the sinners," etc. (Book of Enoch xlv. 1 ff.).¹

There are several other passages equally explicit, and all much to the same effect. Schürer places the chapters in which they are found about the time of Herod the Great. He argues that there is nothing in them which is not entirely explicable on Jewish premisses; that they are either wholly Jewish or wholly Christian, the hypothesis of interpolation being inadmissible; but that if they are Christian, the wonder is that they are not *more* Christian, as they speak of the Messiah only as coming in glory and for judgment, and do not give a hint of any other coming in a state of suffering and humiliation.² This seems to me, I confess, sound reasoning. There is nothing to identify this Judge of quick and dead with the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth.³ We may observe further that judgment is threatened mainly against heathen potentates and tyrants and not upon individuals. This is exactly in accordance with the temper of the Jews, who consoled themselves for the oppression from which they suffered by

¹ I have followed the translation from the Ethiopic by Schodde (Andover, 1882), except for one slight verbal alteration.

² *Neutest. Zeitgesch.* ii. 626.

³ Dr. Drummond admits that this is "a formidable difficulty" (*Jewish Messiah*, p. 61), and therefore does not assert that the "parables" as a whole are post-Christian, but has recourse to the hypothesis of extensive interpolation. Allowance should in fairness be made for the possibility of this.

the prospect of seeing their cause avenged ; but it is far less in accordance with the spirit of primitive Christianity.

I think therefore that the balance of probability is decidedly in favour of the pre-Christian origin of the passages in question. But I incline to this view still more because of what appears to be the excellent historical sequence if we assume that to be the case. If we suppose that the title "Son of Man" was already attached to the personal Messiah before the coming of Christ, then it seems to me that all the facts fall beautifully into their places. Mr. Carpenter takes up the very paradoxical position that Jesus accepted undoubtedly Messianic titles when they were applied to Him by others, and also (if I understand rightly) that He was Himself conscious of a Messianic calling ; but that He never spoke of Himself directly as the Messiah unless it were in the one character as "Servant of Jehovah."¹ In other words, he will not allow the name "Son of Man," which our Lord is made to give to Himself in all the Gospels, and he will allow the name "Servant of Jehovah," which He does not explicitly give to Himself in any of the Gospels, although it was undoubtedly given to Him by primitive tradition.² Let us make the contrary assumption, and see with what a delicate felicity and appropriateness the standing title in the Gospels is chosen. I take it that among the Jews at the Christian era, at least among such as shared the lively expectations which were then abroad of the great deliverance which was approaching, it was distinctly understood that the "Son of Man" meant "the Messiah." At the same time it was not a common title, because the ordinary usage of the phrase "son of man" in the Old Testament pointed to that side of human weakness and frailty which

¹ See p. 125.

² Cf. Matt. xii. 18 ; Acts iii. 13, 26, iv. 27, 30 ; Clem. Rom. *Ad Cor.* lix. 2, 3, 4 ; *Doct. XII. Apost.* ix. 1 ; *Mart. Polyc.* xiv. 1, 3.

the zealots of the day least cared to dwell upon in the King for whom they were looking. But the very reason which led them to avoid the title induced our Lord to take it. It expressed His Messiahship definitely enough for His purpose; but it expressed it in that veiled and suggestive way which characterized the whole of His teaching on His own person. At the same time, it conveyed to those who had ears to hear the whole secret of the incarnation. That which the Jews shrank from and ignored He rather placed in the forefront of His mission. He came as the representative of humanity, not militant and triumphant, but in its weakness and suffering. He was made in all points like as we are, though without sin; so that we might not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring.¹ He entered into human nature, and took it as a whole. That very side of it which men were wont to disparage and to try all they could to escape from He made peculiarly His own. He did so, not only in order to make it the point of contact, the recipient and conductor for His own boundless love and sympathy, but also in order to show that through it lay the true path of salvation; to demonstrate in act as well as in word that he that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it; that the true disciple must take up his cross; and that even an apostle must learn that when he is weak then is he strong.

We note then, running through our Lord's use of this title two veins of meaning side by side. On the one hand, the Son of Man is He who shall come in the clouds of heaven and judge all nations. On the other hand, it is as Son of Man that He mingles in the innocent festivities of life, as "eating and drinking," though in the same capacity He "has not where to lay His head"; it is as the Son

¹ Heb. iv. 15, v. 2.

of Man that He forgives sins, and comes to seek and to save them that are lost; it is as the Son of Man that He foretells His own passion. Other names bring out His other aspects as the Logos, face to face with God from all eternity; as the Son of God, who alone is admitted to the innermost counsels of the Father; as the Son of David, born of the royal lineage, and claiming His royal prerogative; as the anointed Prophet, as well as King; but there is none like this which so touches the tender place in the hearts of men, or which so explains the paradox of victory through suffering: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

Lastly, the form and manner in which the phrase is used,—the very rhythm, we might say, of the sentences in which it is found—stamp it as original. It was natural enough that the seers in the Book of Daniel and in the Book of Enoch should speak as they do of the Son of Man in the third person; but it was by no means so obvious that the Messiah should consistently adopt this objective way of referring to Himself. Surely we have here one of those individual and characteristic touches which make the figure of Christ, for all its universality, stand out in the Gospels with such distinctness. It is a touch no less individual than that by which the fourth evangelist at once conceals and reveals his own identity. We may indeed be pardoned for the conjecture that on this point the disciple has not been unaffected by the example of the Master. And it is equally striking that as in the fourth Gospel the term "Logos," though used by the evangelist, is never put into the lips of the Lord, so throughout the New Testament the term "Son of Man" is reserved for the Lord Himself, with the single exception of the exclamation of St. Stephen.¹ But it is another matter when we are told that this scrupulously consistent, and beautifully harmonious and significant usage

¹ Acts vii. 56.

is all due to a misunderstanding, and that it is the work, not of Christ Himself, but of the early Church. Many of us will doubt the power of the popular imagination to produce effects so much above its own level. But indeed on all grounds the hypothesis seems to be an untenable one. The texture of the Gospels is too closely knit to allow room for it by any process of critical elimination, and to introduce it is to make the history of the founding of Christianity less coherent and less intelligible.

W. SANDAY.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A man of two minds, he is unstable in all his ways."—JAMES i. 6-8.

BEFORE we enter on the main theme of these verses there are two critical points to be noted, to each of which we must give a moment's attention. St. James says that the man of dubious or double mind must not expect to receive anything of "*the Lord*." Now on the lips of any other Apostle, "the Lord" would stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. On *his* lips it stands for God, the Father Almighty, as we may see by comparing ver. 5 with ver. 7: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of *God*"; "Let not that man think he shall receive anything of *the Lord*." Obviously "the Lord" of the latter verse is the "God" of the former. Here then we have a new indication that St. James remained a Jew after he became a Christian. Unlike the other Apostles, he used this term "the Lord" in the Jewish sense, as it was used by the Hebrew prophets. With him, as with them, "the Lord" stood for Jehovah, not for Jesus.

Again, St. James had another Jewish habit. The Hebrew