

And make a labourer of law, and love shall arise
 And such a peace and perfect truth be with the nations
(*Passus* III, 422-4).

That law shall be a labourer and led afield to dunging,
 But the love of kind and Conscience shall come together
 And love shall lead your land to your best liking
(*Passus* IV, 156-7. cf. XVII, 9 sqq.).

Conversion opens the way to love and love to contemplation.

Nearly every line of this great poem will bear much fruit in meditation, and it will lead to a more perfect understanding of the spiritual life. It was written by one whose own experience of genuine conversion was based on a sound theological background. He may have picked up this theological knowledge from the many sermons he must have heard. If so they were doctrinally impressive discourses, and if there are any such today the newly converted soul should seek them out and nourish the new life within him in this same manner.

SON OF MAN

BY

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F all the titles of Jesus this is the most mysterious, yet also it was the one most used by him, the title of his predilection.

Christ is called Son of Mary; and that is not difficult to understand. She gave him as much as any mother ever gives her child, his body, his features, temperament maybe. Mary must have given all these, for there was no human father. Thus Nestorius was indeed wrong-headed when he refused her the title of Mother of God. We do not say of our mothers 'That is the mother of Charles's body', but 'that is Charles's mother', i.e., the person Charles; so Mary is the mother of the Person Christ, and the Person is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Son of David, likewise we can understand; though even this is not simple, for he was not so by direct male descent. Still, he was sufficiently descended by blood through Mary, and far more deeply so by inheriting the kingdom; and yet again, not the kingdom of the earthly Jerusalem, but that of the spiritual Jerusalem. It was for this reason that David recognised his pre-eminence and called him Lord, being king over a greater inheritance (cf. *Ps.* 110, and *Hebrews*).

But the title of 'Son of Man' was an enigma. Sometimes the phrase was used in Aramaic merely to mean 'I'. So is it used by Christ. But often enough, both in the Old and New Testaments,

it has the meaning 'mere man'¹, 'wretched man that I am', having a depreciative sense. That is the meaning throughout Ezechiel. It is significant that the three times Jesus refers to his coming Passion, each time he uses this phrase: 'And he began to teach them that the Son of Man had to suffer many things'.² This idea of the Son of Man being, as it were, obliged to suffer naturally recalls the prophecies of the Suffering Servant, the outcast of men, in the Book of Isaias.³ This title is a link with that side of the personality of the Messias.

But in Daniel the title takes on a quite different significance: it means the Saviour who was to come in glory. Could Christ ever be referring to this meaning, he a carpenter, an itinerant preacher, who often enough slept under the sky with a stone for a pillow? He was no resplendent world-saviour,⁴ and yet in a sense he did lay claim to this title.

There came a moment in Christ's life when it was his duty to explain himself, when it was the duty likewise of those who heard to believe. It was a duty for Christ, for the Sanhedrin was the God-appointed body ruling the Jews; a duty for them 'for no one can do these signs . . . unless God be with him', as one of their number, Nicodemus, clearly saw. (*John*, 3.) The moment was the night before his Passion. In order to get the full force of the questions and answers it is necessary to take the Lucan version and fill it out with St Mark at one point:

'If thou be Christ, tell us'.

And he said to them: 'If I shall tell you, you will not believe me; and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go.'⁵ But hereafter the Son of Man shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God' . . . 'and coming on the clouds of heaven'.

Add SS. Matthew and Mark:

Then they said all: 'Art thou then the Son of God?'

Who said: 'You say that I am'.

There can be no doubt that here Christ is referring to himself, not simply as 'I', nor as the 'wretched man', the 'worm and no man' of Isaias, but as the resplendent saviour; for the qualifying clause sitting 'on the right hand of the power of God, coming on the

¹ Cf. *Job* 25:5-6. 'Behold even the moon is without light, the stars are not pure in his eyes; how much less man, that little worm, the son of man, that vile insect'.

² *Mk.* 8:31. Cf. *Matth.* 17:22 and *Luke* 18:31.

³ *Isaias* 42:1-4; 49:1-6. Cf. Lemonyer, *Théologie du Nouveau Testament*, pp. 65 ff.

⁴ It is usually held that this 'Son of Man' in Daniel referred to the whole Jewish people. But (a) Christ uses it of himself; (b) he is the fifth of a series, the first four being individual kings, and (c) whether we accept the implications or not in ideas, the phraseology, the imagery, is similar to the Zoroastrian literature concerning the Son of Man, a superhuman, yet human, saviour.

⁵ He is referring to his discussion with them on Psalm 110 about the Son of David.

clouds of heaven' is straight from a famous vision of the more-than-human saviour seen and described by Daniel the prophet:

'I looked until the moment when thrones were placed and when an ancient sat. His clothing was white as snow and the hair of his head was like clean wool. His throne was flames of fire; the wheels burning fire. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him; a thousand thousand served him, and myriads stood before him. The judge sat and books were opened. . . . I gazed at the visions of the night, and upon the clouds came, as it were, a Son of Man; he came forward up to the Ancient, and he was made to approach before him. And there was given him power, glory and rule, and all peoples, nations and tongues serve him. His power is an eternal power that shall not pass, and his rule shall never be destroyed'.

The strange part of this vision is its mixture of human and divine. Here alone is it clearly insinuated in the Old Testament that the Saviour was to be God-like, if not God. Indeed, so strange did this idea seem to the Jews, who conceived of the Messiah as a Man born of David's stock, that this juxtaposition of the two titles by Christ, that night before the Sanhedrin, came to that body as a great and startling surprise. That Jesus should claim to be Christ, the Messiah, was bad enough; but that the Christ should be Son of Man in the sense of the vision of Daniel, that meant that Jesus claimed to be 'Son of God'. It is the book of Daniel that explains the leap from Christ's claim to be the Son of Man, to their accusing question: 'Thou art then the Son of God?' His affirmative reply was doubly shocking and blasphemous to them, first because they could not conceive God, the One Almighty God, as having a Son, and secondly, even worse, that this Son should be incarnate. This was the stumbling-block to the Jews. The foolishness that the Gentiles, or Hellenic world, saw in Christ was to come next, that this god-incarnate should die upon a gibbet. Meekness and humility, fruits of the knowledge of our weakness, were no natural virtues among the ancients, any more than they are among the modern Pagans.

And yet in that one title, so carefully chosen out of so many by Christ, was the explanation of both his greatness and his coming humiliation. The Jews should have accepted his reading of the Vision of Daniel, the Gentiles should have understood how the Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, the 'worm and no man', was taking their place, carrying their sins. They should, in humility and with tears, have read the vision of the other and greater prophet Isaias, where the Man of Sorrow was to bear the sufferings of us all.