

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

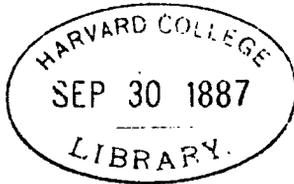
[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)



THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

---

ARTICLE I.

THE TERM "SON OF MAN" AS USED IN THE NEW  
TESTAMENT.

BY THE REV. G. FREDERICK WRIGHT, D. D., PROFESSOR IN OBERLIN THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY.

OUR Lord's use of the appellation "Son of man" presents a very striking and complex phenomenon. The complexity, however, resolves itself into utmost simplicity when once the right position is reached from which to view it. It is one of those instances in which, in the words of Pascal, "Jesus Christ speaks of the most sublime subjects with such simplicity that he seems not to have thought on them, and yet with such accuracy, that what he thought is distinctly brought out," in that there is in the Son of man "the presence of a *God who hideth himself.*"

PECULIARITIES IN THE USE OF THE APPELLATION.

I. The appellation "Son of man" is that by which the Saviour most frequently designated himself. He styles himself "Son of man" sixty different times. Counting repetitions in parallel passages and in quotations, the appellation is used about eighty times in the Gospels. Indeed, Christ scarcely ever applied any other term to himself. In John

there are three or four instances of his styling himself "Son of God." There are also many instances in which he speaks of himself as simply the "Son," leaving the adjunct to be supplied by the nature of the case.

2. In the conversation and writings of the apostles they studiously avoid the use of the appellation except in quoting his own words. This appears remarkably in Matt. xvi. 13-16: "He asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? . . . Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The exceptions in Acts vii. 56; Rev. i. 13; xiv. 14, will be explained in the proper place.

3. Another peculiarity in Christ's application of this term to himself is, that the definite article is always present. It is always *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*. The best critics now insert the article in John v. 27.

4. The conception contained in the appellation "Son of man" is deemed necessary by the Saviour to explain his most wonderful exhibitions of power. See John v. 27: "And he gave him [the "Son"] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." So elsewhere the appellation is repeatedly used with predicates that are in the highest degree startling. The appearance of composure amid this seeming confusion, and the carelessness of consequence everywhere apparent in the use of the term, are most remarkable. See, for example, the account of the healing of the paralytic, Matt ix. 1-8. The paralytic asked for the healing of his body. The Saviour answers, "Thy sins are forgiven." This at once raised a commotion among the Jews, and they said among themselves, "This man blasphemeth." Mark now the answer. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins . . . Arise," etc. The point to be noted here and in the following passages is the connection of such predicates with the appellation "Son of man." Why did not Jesus content himself with the use of the simple pronoun?

The following passages are among the most important to

illustrate the depth of meaning involved in the appellation :—

“Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come” (Matt. x. 23). “For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath” (xii. 8). “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity” (xiii. 41). “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds” (xvi. 27). “Tell the vision [of the transfiguration] to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead” (xvii. 9). Note here that the voice from heaven had just said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (xx. 28).

“The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark viii. 31). “The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed” (xiv. 21).

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you...for the Son of man's sake” (Luke vi. 22). “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels” (ix. 26). “Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God” (xii. 8). “After the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed” (xvii. 30).

“Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John i. 51). “And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven” (vi. 13). “Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even

God, hath sealed" (vi. 27). This passage is specially important from the fact that the term "Son of man" is brought into such proximity to the expression "the Father, even God." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves . . . What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (vi. 53, 62.)

Such, briefly presented, is the complex phenomenon. What is the explanation? From simple examination of the record, two or three insufficient theories may readily be eliminated from the problem.

#### STATEMENT OF THEORIES.

1. It is evident that the phenomenon presented in the New Testament usage of this appellation is too complex and peculiar to have arisen fortuitously. The truth of this statement, if not already apparent, will become more and more so as the discussion proceeds.

2. Nor can this peculiarity of usage have arisen from any idiosyncrasy of single evangelists. Whatever motive influenced one evangelist in his use of this term, influenced to a greater or less extent all the others. The appellation is distributed through the Gospels with remarkable uniformity of proportion, when one considers their relative length and the portion of their contents in which any appellations at all are used. Omitting the doubtful passages, it occurs in Matthew thirty times; in Mark, fourteen times; in Luke, twenty-four times; in John, eleven times.

3. The usage is too peculiar to have been chosen and applied as it is in the Gospels, by any other than genuine historians. Indeed, from the use of this term, a legitimate and powerful argument may be drawn for the authenticity of all four of the Gospels, and especially for the genuineness of the fourth Gospel. These matters, also, will be touched later on in the discussion.

4. Whatever be the specific explanations of the peculiarities in the use of this term, they must all recog-

nize in Christ, as portrayed by the evangelists, a person who assumes that the divine nature in its fullest sense dwells in him, and forms the groundwork of his consciousness.

Three theories have been presented by distinguished commentators to account in full for the peculiarities of the usage of this term. In attempting to define these theories and classify their defenders, some confusion must necessarily arise, since theories as well as "species" often betray their generic unity by the vagueness of their boundary lines. The following are the three theories:—

(1) That the term is equivalent to *Messiah*, and received special significance for the Jews from its use in Dan. vii. 13, where one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven to the ancient of days to receive dominion and glory. This view was maintained by Hengstenberg,<sup>1</sup> and more fully by Schulze.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion to which Schulze arrives, after examining all the passages in the New Testament containing the appellation, is that "While the concept of the Messiah is contained in the name, the peculiar expression of it in the Danielistic sense can never knowingly be left out" (p. 53).

Meyer's views are given at greatest length in his notes upon Matt. viii. 20.<sup>3</sup> He maintains that Jesus means nothing else by the appellation than "the Messiah, according to its significant, prophetic characteristic, which, assuming it to be known to those whom he addressed, the Lord claims for himself." "As often as Jesus, in speaking of himself, uses the words 'the Son of man,' he means nothing else than the Son of man in that prophecy of Daniel, that is, the *Messiah*." In this, Meyer assumes that the term, as equivalent to the Messiah, was familiar to the Jews of Christ's time, referring for confirmation to John xii. 34, and to the usage in the Book of Enoch. But, in John xii. 34, it would seem that

<sup>1</sup> Christology, Trans. G. J. Martin, Edinburgh : 1858, Vol. iii. p. 9r.

<sup>2</sup> Von Menschensohn und von Logos, Gotha : 1867.

<sup>3</sup> See English Translation by Rev. Peter Christie from the sixth German edition, New York : Funk and Wagnalls, 1884.

the people were not familiar with the designation, since they say, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth forever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?" As to the use of the phrase in the Book of Enoch, one feels less inclined to argue confidently from it, since no small doubt pertains to the question whether these portions of that book were written before Christ or after. The strongest arguments for the post-Christian date of the book are drawn from those passages in which the phrase "the Son of man" occurs, especially from chapter 62, where, in addition to styling the Messiah "Son of man," he is also called "Son of the woman."<sup>4</sup> But, admitting that the Book of Enoch was written before the time of Christ, and has not seriously suffered from interpolation, still the usage of the term by a single writer by no means makes it certain that it was a general or a favorite term with the Jews.

The main objection to this view giving such prominence to the vision of Daniel in explanation of the term, arises from the discontinuance of its use by the apostles and the early Christians. Besides, in the vision of Daniel the form which appeared in the clouds of heaven is not said to be a son of man, but one *like* unto a son of man.

The extent to which the early Christian writers abstained from the use of the term is as marked as the abstinence of the apostles. We only find that, in Justin Martyr, Trypho<sup>5</sup> is made to insist upon the fact that Christ was to be a man born of men, subsequently to become Christ by special anointing. From this, and the references quoted in the Book of Enoch, Cremer draws confirmation for his theory, that the term was chosen rather because of the prophecy made to Eve (in Gen. iii. 15), that the one who was to bruise the serpent's head was to be the "seed of the woman." The use

<sup>4</sup> The chief passages in the Book of Enoch containing this term are the following: 46: 2, 3, 4; 48: 2; 62: 7, 9, 14; 63: 11; 69: 26, 27; 70: 1; 71: 17.

<sup>5</sup> See Dialogue with Trypho, chap. xlix.

of the term put in the mouth of James by Hegesippus<sup>6</sup> would seem to be explained like that of the vision of Stephen. It is to be noticed, also, that the Jews are made by Hegesippus to respond, to the explanation of James, with a "Hosanna to the Son of David," revealing what was the more favorite class of terms in use at that time for the designation of the Messiah.

With this view, also, that of Holtzmann most nearly corresponds.<sup>7</sup> In his article in the *Zeitschrift* we find him saying, that "since Scholten (1809), who first considered the question minutely, and since Lücke, who brought the Johannean exegesis into suspicion, many voices have been raised to show that there is only one particular place given which can serve as the source of this New Testament representation, so that the majority of the critics of the present time refer the expression to Dan. vii. 13" (p. 216). "But, as is well known, Schleiermacher pronounces the Old Testament derivation a strange fancy."<sup>8</sup> Likewise others, also, like Neander, Olshausen, Kling, and Dorner, cannot find the reference there; and finally Weisse<sup>9</sup> gives attention to the originality of the teaching of Jesus. But as even he cannot help granting that the New Testament author at least referred back to the expression in Daniel, so Baur deems it necessary to establish later corrections of the words of Jesus after the analogy of Dan. vii. 13, and even to distinguish in the mouth of Jesus a later Danielistic significance differing from the earlier, original conception" (p. 219). Holtzmann sums the discussion up under three questions:—

1st. Whether Jesus found in vogue an appropriate interpretation of the Danielistic passage; 2nd. Whether he would veil his Messianic claim by it, or would reveal it openly; 3rd.

<sup>6</sup>Eusebius, H. E., Bk. ii. c. xxiii.

<sup>7</sup>*Zeitschrift fuer wiss. Theologie*, 1865, pp. 212-237, article Ueber den N. Tlichen Ausdruck Menschensohn; also *Jahrbuecher fuer deutsche Theologie* for 1867, pp. 410, 411.

<sup>8</sup>Einleit. ins N. T., p. 479 ff.; Glaubensl. Vol. ii. p. 9; *Leben Jesu*, p. 293.

<sup>9</sup>Evangelienfrage, p. 104.

Whether he brought out, with the application of Dan. vii. 13 to his person, a still more definite sense than appears in the passage itself.

“But even if—what we do not have to decide here—the places in the Book of Enoch under question are certainly pre-Christian, or are even to be recognized as the oldest part of the whole,—as Dillmann,<sup>10</sup> Köstlin,<sup>11</sup> Ewald,<sup>12</sup> Meyer,<sup>13</sup> and Weizsäcker<sup>14</sup> take it,—then we would certainly say, with Weizsäcker<sup>15</sup> and Baur,<sup>16</sup> that this designation of Messiah had not come to be popularly used in any instance; but that it was well known only by the cultivated classes. Schenkel appropriately remarks on this, that Jesus when he first applied this name to himself (Mark ii. 10) did it with reference to the Jewish theologians present (p. 56). But, in general, it is to be considered, that Jesus used this expression of himself—as well according to the tradition of the Synoptists (Mark ii. 10) as of that of John (i. 52), in the earlier as in the later—in the same characteristic manner, without therefore provoking in the phrase the opposition likely to arise from use of the better-known Messianic words. Wholly apart from the questions concerning Enoch, it is proper to draw from the Gospels themselves the conclusion, that the name ‘Son of man’ was not a generally diffused and popular designation of Messiah.<sup>17</sup> But, on the other hand, this early use of the name proves unquestionably that the thought of his Messianic character occupied him strongly from the first, indeed, from the time of his meeting with the Baptist.<sup>18</sup>

“In close connection with this stands the other question,

<sup>10</sup> Buch Henoch, p. 157.

<sup>11</sup> *Jahrbuecher fuer deutsche Theologie*, Vol. iii. p. 90 f.

<sup>12</sup> *Geschichte Christus* Asg. 2 and 90 f.

<sup>13</sup> *Commentary on Matthew* (1864) S. 223 f.

<sup>14</sup> *Ev. Gesch.*, p. 427 f.

<sup>15</sup> Vol. iv. p. 740.

<sup>16</sup> *N. Tliche Theologie*, pp. 77f, 81.

<sup>17</sup> *Com. Weizsaecker, Ev. Geschichte*, p. 429.

<sup>18</sup> *Com. Keim, Der geschichtliche Christus*, p. 84.

whether this self-designation was regarded as comprehensible by every man, and from the first generally understood—as, e. g., Meyer<sup>19</sup> and Renan<sup>20</sup> assert; or whether Jesus, when he called himself 'Son of man,' signified his highest Messianic nature by an enigmatical word, and so, in a certain sense, veiled it.<sup>21</sup> The decision is determined by the undoubted fact, that Jesus did not wish to present himself, from the first, directly as the Messiah.<sup>22</sup> Whenever, therefore, he applied to himself the name 'Son of man,' he uttered a riddle (Com. p. 493); .....only we must not go so far as to say the expression chosen in opposition to it (Son of God) had no reference to the Messianic idea. . . . As he had chosen it [the appellation 'Son of man'] to avert the consequences of a better-known Messianic title, so he also used it without always being conscious of his assumption. However, such a self-designation held in it the possibility of taking up the Messianic idea, and, as soon as it was sufficiently enlarged and established in its higher significance, of having this conception come forth in it.

"We must, then, with Weizsäcker<sup>23</sup> decide that only to the learned classes in Jerusalem is a true knowledge of the meaning of the term to be ascribed. But we can also well believe that the controversy mentioned in John xii. 34, occurred in the last days of the life of Jesus. . . . Even according to Meyer<sup>24</sup> the expression 'Son of man' does not designate the Messiah directly, but has this sense only when this is compared, in the consciousness of his cotemporaries, with the writings of Daniel. Even this knowledge can come to the people only after a time" (pp. 224–229).

<sup>19</sup> Commentary on Mark and Luke (1860), p. 31; Matthew (1864), p. 223 ff.

<sup>20</sup> P. 132.

<sup>21</sup> It is thus regarded by Ritschl (*Theologische Jahrbuecher*, 1851, p. 514), Weiss (*Evangelienfrage*, p. 213), Hilgenfeld (*Zeitschrift*, 1863, p. 329), Strauss (*Leben Jesu*, p. 226f), Wittichen (*Jahrbuecher fuer deutsche Theologie*, Vol. vii. p. 365), A. Geiger (*Judenthum und seine Geschichte*, 1864, p. 111).

<sup>22</sup> Com. My. Synoptischen Evangelien, p. 431.

<sup>23</sup> Vol. iv. p. 740.

<sup>24</sup> Commentary on Matt., p. 224.

(2) The second theory worthy of consideration is that revived in modern times by Schleiermacher. According to this, the term was chosen by Christ to bring into prominence the perfection of his manhood. In this view, the constant use of the article would indicate some such definite idea as would be expressed by our phrases "the ideal man," "the typical man," "the model man," "the representative man."

This view was ably presented, some years ago, to American readers by Professor William S. Tyler.<sup>25</sup> It is also that adopted by Trench,<sup>26</sup> Olshausen,<sup>27</sup> Neander,<sup>28</sup> and Liddon.<sup>29</sup> On a previous page, however, Liddon had said, that, "in consequence of this [Daniel's] prophecy, the 'Son of man' became a popular and official title of the Messiah," and that the use of the title "was a claim to Messiahship." Fairbairn should perhaps be classified here, but his views are somewhat hard to define.<sup>30</sup> While giving great prominence to Dan. vii. 13 in explaining the phrase, he makes much of the contrast between the beasts of the first four kingdoms and the one like a son of man, who was to establish the fifth monarchy. According to this view, the "one like a son of man is brought in to represent another and better kingdom, and one both receiving his kingdom from above, and descending thence, as on the chariot of deity, to take possession of his dominion. The obvious inference and conclusion is, that here at last divine and human were to be intermingled in blessed harmony, and that till such intermingling took place, and the kingdom based on it was properly erected, the ideal of humanity should remain an ideal still, bestial properties should really have the ascendant, and should retain their sway, till they were dislodged by the manifestation and working of him who, with divine aid, should restore humanity to its

<sup>25</sup> BIBLIOTHECA SACRA, Vol. xxii. pp. 59-69.

<sup>26</sup> Parables, p. 74; Miracles, p. 170.

<sup>27</sup> See on Acts vii. 56.

<sup>28</sup> Life of Christ, Harper's Ed., p. 95 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Bampton Lectures for 1866, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Hermeneutical Manual, pp. 271-273.

proper place and function in the world." Upon this view he explains John iii. 13 ; v. 27 ; and Matt. xxvi. 64.

(3) A third and more satisfactory view is that stated by the late Professor John Morgan in the following passage:—<sup>31</sup>

"If we are asked why our Lord employs this title so often and so emphatically of himself, we answer, It is to push forward into the foreground the great idea of the humiliation of his deity into humanity. It is always the Divine Word calling himself the Son of man, announcing thus that he is become flesh, and come to sojourn among us, as our brother. The consciousness of divinity is always there. The divinity is *assumed*, while the humanization of that divinity is *asserted*. Before his hearers Jesus stands in human form and nature, calling himself the Son of man, while he performs works, or predicts operations, which demand the attributes of Godhead. The title 'Son of man' equals God manifest in the flesh, or the Word who was God become flesh ; or God with us. The point of departure in the use of the title 'Son of man' is the divinity of the Saviour ; while that which is arrived at is the humanity.

"The title 'Son of God,' on the other hand, asserts the divinity of the Saviour—the divinity of the Son of Mary and descendant of David. The point of departure in the use of the title is the humanity, and that which is arrived at is the divinity. It expresses that the manifest human being presenting himself before men is united with deity—personally blended with God. The nature assumed in the designation is the human nature, but the nature affirmed is the divine nature ; to union with which the human nature is declared to be exalted. In consciousness of his divin-

<sup>31</sup> *Oberlin Evangelist*, April 14, 1858. It is in place here to say that the line of thought pursued in this article was not only suggested by the article of Professor Morgan referred to, but took definite shape in connection with his teaching and personal correspondence; though it need not be said that Professor Morgan is directly responsible for the views here presented, only so far as he is quoted. An argument for the genuineness of the Gospels, drawn from this view of the meaning of the term, may be found in the writer's "Logic of Christian Evidences," published in 1880, pp. 214-216.

ity our Lord calls himself the 'Son of man;' in consciousness of his humanity, he declares himself the Son of God. Each title includes the same elements, but in different relations—the one presenting Godhead depressed to humanity, the other humanity inhabited by all the fulness of the Godhead. If there is any difference in the elementary contents and implications of the two titles, the title 'Son of man' more absolutely involves deity than the other. So that, in a sentence of our Lord's utterance in which 'I' should be the subject and the 'Son of man' the predicate or appositive, there could be nothing included which would imply the absence or quiescence of any essential attribute of God, of infinite power or knowledge. Thus our Lord would not say, Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God, neither the Son of man, but my Father only; because deity always lies at the basis of the title, and gives it its significance. The completed title of this passage is 'The Son of God;' and it is so almost universally understood. The 'I' implied in the passage as the basis of the expression, is the humanity, which in however intimate union with deity did not know that day or that hour. . . . To him the divinity, but to them the humanity, was the natural point of departure. . . . The article expresses that if any other son of man was distinguished from the rest of the race in nature, he was not—he is *the* son of man; that, whatever innocent weakness belongs to the race as such, he partakes of it."

This is substantially the view presented by Schmid,<sup>32</sup> who well says, that "it is not at all in character for Jesus when he chose a favorite designation to use it in a merely external sense. He would rather, if he borrowed a name, give it in an original manner a peculiar sense. Finally, there are places in which he uses this expression of himself with such meaning that he carries us necessarily beyond the bare reference in the prophecy of Daniel, and establishes the meaning of this expression with special reference to the signification of

<sup>32</sup> *Biblische Theologie*, 4 Auflage, 1868, p. 121.

the term itself." Schleiermacher is quoted (p. 122), with approval, as saying, that the expression indicates that there must be a distinction between Christ and other men. This distinction, Schmid affirms, consists not only in his being a superior man, but in his being more than a man. Both ideas are always in the expression. "Notwithstanding he is Son of man, he is at the same time much higher than a man; and although he is higher than a man, he is still a man with all human weakness, though a perfect man."

With this, Dorner's view substantially coincides.<sup>88</sup> "This designation 'Son of man' must be the product of a self-consciousness for which the fact of human sonship, or being the Son of man, was not that which lay nearest to it, a thing of itself, a matter of course, but that which was secondary and superinduced. But if the self-consciousness of Christ was so modified that his being human was presented to him as being secondary, then the primary thing in his consciousness must have been something else,—that which is represented in John xvii. 5; and the original wherein his self-consciousness knew itself immediately at home (com. Luke ii. 49) must, at least from the time when he had himself entire, when his innermost reality came into being, have been divine." From the use of the article, Dorner introduces into the concept the idea of the "pure, most noble and perfect" man.

Dr. Baur<sup>88</sup> admits that Matt. xxiv. 30 and xxvi. 64 refer to Daniel's prophecy, but shows that in John i. 53; iii. 13; vi. 53; and v. 27 the appellation occurs without reference to Daniel; but that Christ, as the Logos identical with God, and so standing above men, is called "Son of man," in order to lay greater stress upon the human side of his nature (p. 275). Speaking (p. 278) of the question in Matt. xvi. 13, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" he says that it is a strange question if the concept of Messiah were directly bound up in that of the Son of man,—it is evident

<sup>88</sup> Doctrine of Person of Christ, Div. i. vol. i. p. 54, T. and T. Clark, Edinb.

<sup>88</sup> Hilgenfeld's *Zeitschrift fuer wiss. Theologie*, 1860, p. 274ff.

from this that the expression is not a well-known and common equivalent for Messiah,—it must be taken either in an emphatically high or an emphatically low sense. In commenting on Matt. xii. 1–8, Baur attempts (p. 283 ff.) to show that the expression "Son of man" must be used in an emphatically low sense. The argument proceeds thus: You admit (verse 3) that David broke the letter of the law in eating the shew bread. You admit (verse 5) that the priests broke the law of the Sabbath in attending the temple service. You must hold (verse 5) with the prophet that "mercy" is more important than the mere outward performance of sacrifice. Reading, with Lachmann and Tischendorf, *μετ' ἑαυτὸν* instead of *μετ' ἑαυτοῦ*, the conclusion is, especially in connection with Mark ii. 27 ("the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath"), that he as a man is above the letter of the law. If in using the term "Son of man" he had been understood to mean the Messiah, the argument would have turned on the evidence of his being the Messiah; or if his Messiahship were admitted, that would have precluded the need of any argument. We may add to this, that the use of the term here in the presence of the disciples as a known and familiar equivalent of the Messiah would have afforded them ground for its use hereafter. Their abstaining from its use shows that the name was, to say the least, enigmatical. Nor is there anything out of character with his love, as Dorner supposes,<sup>84</sup> in such a supposition; for Christ habitually spoke in parables, and his actions were confessedly enigmas that were not to be explained till after his death. What our Lord states here from the standpoint of his consciousness is, "The divine personage before you, who has taken upon himself the form of a man, for purposes of mercy may certainly subordinate the Sabbath to the necessities of his service with as much propriety as David or the priests." The neuter form (*μετ' ἑαυτὸν*) in verse 6 (See also the neuter *πλεῖον* in verses 41, 42) falls in naturally, as referring in our Lord's mind to the fact of the incarnation and its merciful

<sup>84</sup> *Person of Christ*, p. 54.

significance. (There is thus no ground at all, either internal or external, for Baur's rejection of verse 8 as a gloss of the commentators.) If it is objected to this view, that it is giving to the words a meaning beyond what was understood in them at the time, we answer, a person's words as well as actions must be interpreted by all we can know about the person. We see no more objection to Baur's idea, that there has been progress in the fulness of meaning attached successively to the name by the Synoptists, by John, and the later church, than we do to the fact that there has been progress generally in the interpretation of the New Testament. But interpretation is only the process of bringing out explicitly what is implicitly in the language. Baur perhaps means that there was an advance in Christ's own conceptions of his nature. The true theory is that John, whose Gospel is essentially supplementary, quotes those sayings of Christ in which the doctrine of the Logos is more distinctly stated. Under the theory we are now presenting, there is a unity, in the underlying thought of the usage of the term under consideration, running through all the Gospels. A profounder conception of Christ's person may, without objection, be supposed to have possessed the church when John's Gospel was written, and have brought to mind the deeper mysteries of his language; or, what is more likely, the bent of John's mind led him to lay hold of those more profound subjective expressions of Christ which appear in John's report of the use of the term "Son of man," as well as in other places.

Professor Reubelt, in "The Person of Christ," a work founded on that of Dr. Gess (pp. 21-25), while holding that some of the instances of the use of this term cannot be explained without the idea of the fulfilling in it of Daniel's prophecy, justly says that that reference cannot explain it all, and asks, Why use this exclusively, rather than "Servant of God," "The Branch," or "Son of David," which were familiar terms with the prophets? While bringing in (needlessly as we think) the conception of "ideal man," as partly explaining its significance, the author admits that emphasis is

given in such a way, by the term, to the humanity, as to indicate that there was something supernatural at the core of it.

Hilgenfeld<sup>85</sup> does not go as far as Baur in cutting the phrase "Son of man" loose from Dan. vii. 13, and from a distinct reference to the Jewish conception of the Messiah; but he gives preference (p. 330) to Baur's explanation of the term, as indicating "a man in the most genuine and the widest sense, who did not consider himself a stranger to anything which pertained to the lot of human life, even though it be the humblest and the most limited,—a man, in short, who considered it as his peculiar calling to undergo all the suffering and sacrifice natural to his condition." This view of Baur is preferred by Hilgenfeld to Schleiermacher's view of the ideal man. The last page of this article is worth translating entire.

"We certainly cannot go back to the old church and still common view without enlargement. If Jesus did by the designation 'Son of man' really refer to the vision of Daniel, where one like a son of man comes in the clouds of heaven to the ancient of days, he has still neither denied the general significance of the expression, nor met with it as a current, common designation of the Messiah. In the book of Daniel the (undeniably personal) Messiah is merely compared with a son of man. Also, in the original pre-Christian Book of Enoch this designation is still indeterminate, even though the section of the book from chapters 37-71, even on other grounds (which Dillmann and his followers well try their utmost to remove, but cannot succeed) is demonstrably a Christian interpolation in the pre-Christian book, with its Son of man eternal, and at the same time woman-born. We see, also, that Jesus did not accept the Old Testament Jewish representation of the Messiah without enlargement, but essentially transformed it. The current Messianic name 'Son of God' which was bestowed upon him by the heavenly voice (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5) he did not altogether avoid even before

<sup>85</sup> *Zeitschrift fuer wiss. Theologie*, for 1863, article entitled, *Die Evangelien und die geschichtliche Gestalt Jesu*, pp. 327-334.

Peter (Matt. xvi. 16) recognized him as such, and the High Priest (Matt. xxvi. 63) compelled the definite declaration. Jesus made his likeness to a son of man (a thing which barely entered into Daniel's Messiah) into the principal idea. Wholly in addition to the Old Testament there lies a constant antithesis to the current Jewish representation of the Messiah in this; that an earthly man, weak and frail as all others, yes, more homeless than they, gathers up into his religious self-consciousness the whole supernatural glory of the Messiah. In this sense, Jesus in the expression 'Son of man' designated himself as the Messiah who united in himself things new and old (com. Matt. xiii. 52); although his full glory in the kingdom (com. Dan. vii. 13, 14), together with the prerogatives of judgment which he exercised, pertained primarily to the future. The name 'Son of man' in the conception of Jesus has always this significance, that he included the humility of his external appearance in the greatness of the Messiah. It is also, precisely on this account, the Son of man, who must enter into his glory through the dark portals of suffering (com. Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 12; xxvi. 52). It is the grandeur of humility and self-abasement, the spiritual greatness in earthly humility; it is this peculiar principle of Christian meekness at all times, through which Jesus transformed and spiritualized the Jewish representation of Messiah, and in this new-born aspect raised it to its universal and historical significance."

Hovey<sup>88</sup> is not far from this general view. He says (p. 47), "Although this title 'Son of man' is, in a certain sense, virtually given to the Messiah in the Old Testament, it is but one of many there given to him, and is found in but a single passage. We cannot therefore suppose that it is preferred to all others by Jesus simply because it belonged to him as the Messiah. His habitual choice of it points to some other and special reason,—a reason to be sought in the designation itself. . . . This designation emphasizes the human origin and characteristics; it denotes one who is man by birth and nature, one who is a born man."

<sup>88</sup> God with Us, Boston, 1872.

Canon Wordsworth<sup>87</sup> presents with some modifications this same view. He defines the title as "the name of the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, the eternal Word, the everlasting Son, becoming incarnate, and so made the Son of man."

So, also, Stuart on Dan. vii. 13, speaks of the appellation as designating "very significantly the frail and suffering condition of Jesus in his state of humiliation." Yet, in order to avoid the idea of degradation, Stuart thinks it essential always to refer the term to Daniel for explanation.

Luthardt, however, on the "Person of Christ"<sup>88</sup> exactly reverses the true point of view from which the terms "Son of man" and "Son of God" are presented.

The correct idea seems to be in Dr. Bushnell's mind when he asks, "Who is this that is constantly conceding his humanity?"

So Tholuck (John i. 52 (7th ed.)) thinks that "prominence is given by the predicate, in the term 'Son of man,' to the point of the manifestation in humanity, in antithesis, consequently, to the higher nature." This he calls more properly the ancient opinion.

De Wette's view is akin to this;<sup>89</sup> justly reasoning, from Matt. ix. 6; xvi. 13, that Son of man is an indirect designation of the Messiah to denote his human, humiliated individuality, as contrasted with God. De Wette, however, still gives prominence to the Danielistic reference.

Keim, in his "Life of Christ," pp. 73-76, uses the following language:—

"It is always to be understood, that the mere Old Testament concept of Messiah did by no means exhaust the sense of the word 'Son of man' in the mouth of Jesus. That word which he loved was to him, doubtless, not a mere, arbitrary word for his Messiahship; also, no mere pedagogic, enigmatical, and learned word. It is profound to the pro-

<sup>87</sup> Smith's Bible Dictionary, article Son of Man.

<sup>88</sup> Bremen Lectures, 1869, p. 166, Gotha, 1869.

<sup>89</sup> See Com. on Matt. viii. 20.

found, full of meaning, rich in significance, even with reference to the Old Testament, but also far beyond this he has spoken into it its significance. He would designate himself as the relative of mankind even in his place as Messiah; so some would conclude from the word itself, that since he called himself not only *a* son of man, but *the* son of *the* man, he thereby under the term *son* reveals himself not chiefly as the offspring, but, in conformity to the manner of speech, as a fellow-partner in the fullest sense; and under the *man* refers not to Joseph, or Mary, or merely to David, or Abraham, or Adam, but the germs in them all. His particular expressions give the Sonship everywhere this reference to humanity; as the Son of man brings the kingdom of heaven to the earth, etc.

"It becomes present science to build up the truth out of these antitheses and this confusion.

"The Son of man, as one veiled indeed, but himself wholly conscious of his greatness and his position as Messiah, selected this title. But his knowledge, and his expressed will, which he, according to Ewald, assumed in this most peculiar word and most favorite name, was that of a human Messiah, not merely according to the grovelling Judaistic ideal of a ruling and lordly Son of God, but a companion or mediator for men, a helping servant among men. This knowledge, this will, lights up, like magic, the genuinely human character and the spiritual conception of the kingdom of heaven, which he always announced. He promised for the advancement of his work every gift, every pledge, which could bring to humanity the fulfilling of their unquenchable admiration, the exhibition of their eternal ideal. . . . For, in truth, his glory lay in his servitude."

#### GENERAL REMARKS.

The view presented under this third head is so important that we may profitably pursue it a little farther. It is a familiar principle in language, that appellations naturally express not those elements which are necessarily most central

and essential in the individual described, but those which appear most striking from the point of view occupied by the speaker. Upon this principle, it would be natural for the apostles to express, in the appellations they applied to Christ, their exalted conception of his divinity and official dignity, since from their point of view these were his most striking attributes. They looked at Christ from humanity upwards. The humanity in him was not so much to be distinguished from other humanity, except in its divine connections. To them the striking thing was that humanity had been exalted to be the Son of God, and that a man had been set apart and anointed as the King of Israel and the Head of the church. Hence the character of the appellations by which they instinctively designated him.

On the other hand, from the divine point of contemplation the whole thought, and consequently the expression of it, is reversed. In his divine nature, Christ looked at himself from divinity downwards. Therefore, when Jesus in consciousness of his divinity speaks of the Messiah, he says Son of man, since from the heavenly point of view the striking thing is that divinity had joined itself to humanity—that the Word had become flesh.

We may illustrate by an example. The European would call Stanley "the celebrated African explorer," while the Negro would speak of him as "the powerful white man from the north." The Europeans never think of specifying the color of the celebrated explorer, nor indeed would they often refer to any of the characteristics most familiar to them; while those are precisely the things to be incorporated into an appellation used by those whose acquaintance with him is formed only on his tours of exploration. Thus, by the subtle workings of his linguistic instincts, each speaker would betray the position he was in. The Englishman would assume a general knowledge of the explorer's Caucasian blood and civilization; and, because of general familiarity with these, they would be the least noteworthy things in the person of the traveller. Whereas to the Negro the qualities too famil-

iar for expression by the explorer's countrymen are exactly the most noteworthy things which need explicit expression in the appellation chosen in Africa to designate him. The Englishman looks from Europe to Africa; the Negro looks from Africa to Europe. Hence the African would assume a knowledge of the presence and career of the traveller, and express in his appellation what was supplementary, striking, and mysterious about the traveller's person. This distinction would not be consciously formulated either by European or African, yet it is one of those metaphysical harmonies which philosophical attention would be sure to reveal.

Thus, it comes about, as remarked above, that, taken in its whole contents and implication, the title "Son of man," as used by Christ, is a more exalted expression than "Son of God." But the exaltation arises from the height of the point of view from which the conception underlying the appellation proceeds, and thus there is a natural explanation of the striking fact that the apostles themselves did not adopt the appellation. The standpoint from which this appellation is appropriate is so high that mortals cannot attain it while on earth. In all their expressions concerning Christ, the limitations arising from their point of view are observable. The disciples most frequently called Jesus, "Christ," or, in Hebrew, "Messiah," which involves a conception similar to that in the term "Son of God." The humanity so apparent in Jesus was seen to be elevated by the anointing of the Lord. Uniformly, the view is from humanity upwards, and the appellations used naturally *express* the dignity of his person rather than the humiliation of his position. Thus, when Paul speaks of the Saviour as "the man," to complete the conception he adds "Christ Jesus." The title "Son of man" was inappropriate to the disciples, because of the impossibility of their naturally making the assumptions which the use of the term involves. But the appellation falls most appropriately from Christ's own lips when speaking of himself, because the assumption involved in its use was perfectly natural and congruous, since he was the Divine Word become flesh.

The exceptions confirm the rule. The martyr Stephen, in his dying moments, exclaims, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56). It is noticeable that the scene is here laid in heaven, and that the words are those of one who was for the moment exalted in vision to the heavenly point of view. Now in heaven, where the divine nature is so fully revealed, the most wonderful characteristic of Christ is not the glory of his natural attributes, but the condescension of his love. The things calling for expression in the appellation applied to Christ in heaven relate to the condescension of his mission. He is not merely the Word by whom the worlds were made, but he is the "Word made flesh;" he is "the Lamb of God." The burden of the heavenly song is the glory of "the Lamb that was slain." The experiences of the incarnation constitute the crowning glory in the manifestation of the Divine Word. Hence, from the lips of one exalted in vision to the heavenly world, as Stephen was, the appellation "Son of man," by which to designate Christ, was most natural; and so the situation of the speaker accounts for the exception, and proves the rule. Perhaps, however, Stephen here alludes to and merely quotes the words of Christ.

Rev. i. 13 and xiv. 14 also present an apparent, but no real, exception to the rule, that the appellation "the Son of man" was instinctively avoided by the disciples and early Christians; for in both these passages the term is without the article, and the person described is said to be not *the* Son of man, but one like *a* son of man. While, therefore, there can be no doubt that the person referred to in these passages is Christ, it is equally clear that the apostles did not use the term here as an appellative. The *ὄμοιον* makes it necessary to understand *ὡς ἄνθρωπον*, in its common sense, as indicating humanity merely. As Stuart remarks upon the passages, "It would be incongruous to say one like to the Son of man, for inasmuch as he who now makes his appearance is himself the Son of man; . . . so it would be merely

saying that he was like himself." "The majesty and sublimity of the personage who makes his appearance in the present case are described in the sequel, and nothing more is here designated by *ὁμοιον υἱῷ ἀνθρώπου* than that the form was human."

Trench's objection to this explanation, that the omission of the article here does not require the translation "a son of man" any more than *υἱὸς θεοῦ*, in Matt. xxvii. 40, demands to be translated "a son of God," and *πνεῦμα θεοῦ* "a spirit of God," cannot be maintained; for in the case of *υἱὸς θεοῦ* and *πνεῦμα θεοῦ* they had each come into such common use as to have almost acquired the significance of proper names. Whereas *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* had never, so far as we have evidence, been used by the apostles even as an appellative. Much less should we find them using it at once as a proper name.

This third explanation of the significance of the title "Son of man" explains most naturally the constant presence of the article in it. "The Son of man" is a character unique in heaven. With one only of the human race has God in his fulness connected himself. He is from the heavenly point of view the only Son of man. Only in one instance has the Word become flesh. In the uniqueness of this translation we find "the understood range of thought" indicated by the presence of the article. This is sufficient for its use without reference to the passage in Daniel.

This explanation of the title also explains the remarkable assumptions of power and authority which are made under it. The Second Person of the Trinity fitted himself to be our Judge by becoming the Son of man. Through that act he made himself our peer. In him we have an High Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Because of the voluntary humiliation of the Divine Word all shall know that his judgment, even when severe, is executed in love. Christ has power to forgive sin, because he was the Son of man; since it was on the humiliation of deity involved in the assumption of that title that the atonement was conditioned.

From this point of view, also, there is appropriateness in Christ's saying that the Son of man came down from heaven, and at the same time affirming that he is in heaven (John iii. 13). Indeed, in this passage the inherent dignity of the appellation appears more clearly, perhaps, than anywhere else.

As already intimated, the use of this term is an incidental but striking confirmation both of the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels and of the truth of the orthodox doctrine of the twofold nature of Christ.

On any of the conceivable views of the meaning of the term, the limitations of its use in unauthentic Gospels would not have been such as we have found them to be. If the Gospels are of late origin, no motive can be assigned to the writers for the introduction of so peculiar a phrase, and one which was so foreign to the Epistles of Paul, which were undoubtedly written during the apostolic age; and, if they were the work of deluded men or deceivers at any time, it is most unlikely that the phrase should have been chosen, and used in so peculiar a manner. In the first place, its use would not have been natural to writers having the Jews in view, for the Jews had other more familiar designations for their expected Hero and Deliverer. All Jewish hopes centred in one who should bear the title "Christ" or "Messiah." John the Baptist is compelled to deny that he is the Christ. The woman at the well of Sychar was moved, by the Saviour's searching knowledge of her heart, to exclaim, "Is not this the Christ?" The popular expectation appears in John vii. 40-42. Some of the multitude, therefore, "when they heard these words, said, This is of a truth a prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, that the Christ cometh of the seed of David? and from Bethlemem, the village where David was?" The burden of Paul's preaching was to show that Jesus was the Christ (Acts xvii. 3). The high priest adjures Jesus to say whether he was the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. xxvi. 63). "Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall

see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." The apostles labored throughout their lives to make the Jews accept Jesus as the Christ, and this is the term most likely to have been put in the mouth of Jesus in the Gospels by any but genuine writers.

Nor, in the second place, would the theory that the term signifies the model man furnish motives to writers who were not genuine to use the term after the manner that we find it used in the New Testament. According to this theory, the term hid in it an appeal to the Gentiles. This would have offended the Jews. The animosity of that race would have been aroused by such an appeal. Furthermore, on this supposition, why did not the apostles and their companions use the term when preaching and writing to the Gentiles? Why is it represented as never used except in the presence of Jewish auditors? This is all the more forcible if, as is doubtless the case, the Epistles were written before the Gospels had secured general circulation, even if not before they were written. The apparent incongruity between this and the other titles applied to Christ would deter conscious deceivers from using it, and would have prevented it from being suggested to those who may be supposed to have taken active part in the construction of myths and legends. The bent of mind in ungentle writers would be in the direction of removing apparent difficulties. Whereas, the use of this title multiplies the apparent difficulties, which are only explained upon deep study and thorough comprehension of the whole.

Finally, the third theory, which so fully accords with the facts, is altogether too subtle and profound to find support in any representation that does not rest upon truth; for, when properly understood, truth is far more strange than fiction. The truth concerning the nature, relations, and work of Christ does not reveal itself to superficial observation. Taking the record just as it is, we find that the purported authors of the Gospels entertain the most exalted conception of their Hero which it is possible for the human mind to entertain. We find them repeatedly calling him the "Son of the living

God," and applying to him the most sacred Jewish equivalent for that expression, namely, the "Messiah," and this when the longing of the Jews for the coming of this Messiah was most intense. So possessed were the apostles by the belief that their Hero had risen from the dead, that they preached the hopes connected with such a fact in the face of every danger, and yielded up their lives to attest the sincerity of their belief.

Now the mind of man is no more capricious in its general operations than are the other forces of nature. The will is free, indeed, but the intellect is not free. It has the limitations of other forces in nature. The mind can be intoxicated by truths too large for its capacity as really as the brain can be intoxicated by alcohol. We may not be able to determine the number of drops of alcohol required in a given case to intoxicate; but we can estimate it near enough for practical purposes. So it is with the motives that underlie such intense activities as those engaged in laying the foundations of Christianity, and in giving shape to its early literature. The conceptions of Christ's nature appearing in the New Testament as the firm belief of the apostles are such as would be sure to turn the heads of actors who are not genuine, and to throw out of proportion any literary productions which might originate with them. Nothing but the essential integrity of the writers, and their truthfulness in transmitting their impressions, could have prevented the New Testament from becoming a burlesque, like so many other intended revelations of the Unseen.

Yet what have we here found in the singular use of this term? We have found the Hero himself represented as habitually applying a title to himself which his admiring disciples instinctively shrank from using of him. This appellation, though apparently unintelligible to those whom he was addressing, and devoid of anything in its sound that was prepossessing, and having on its face nothing that corresponded to their exalted conception of their expected Deliverer, was, notwithstanding, suffered to go into accepted history without

explanation. This is certainly most singular, and nothing but extreme desire to transmit impressions as they were made upon the original writers will account for it. On the strength of such evidence, the record may be accepted without question as genuine, and we may be sure that the record has not been seriously tampered with, since the effects of such tampering would certainly have been apparent in the remarkable use of the term under consideration.

On the supposition that unauthentic hands have touched the literature of the New Testament at any point, either in their production or their transmission, the undesigned harmony which appears so clearly in the use of this term would inevitably have been disturbed. While, as a matter of fact, the whole complex phenomenon develops naturally enough out of the truths involved in the orthodox doctrine of Christ's essential and blended divine and human nature, as recorded and transmitted by human agents of scrupulous care and honesty. What we have in the Scriptures are not counterfeits, but facts. They are not *explanations* of truths, but the *truths themselves*. The writers have given to us what their eyes had seen and their ears had handled of the Word of God. On no other supposition can so singular a linguistic usage as we have been considering be explained.