

Divine Attributes and The Second Man

Walter Thomas Whybrow

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I would point out the real object of attack in all the system of error now so prevalent. The endeavor is to separate divine attributes, such as having life in Himself, omnipotence, omniscience, &c., from the Second Man, the Son of Man. This, moreover, is not merely deduced or inferred from the general drift of certain teachings, but Mr. Raven has actually stated it word after word, more than once, in letters published with his consent. He says:

What characterizes the Second Man could not include all that is true of a divine person, such as self-existence (having life in Himself), omnipotence, omniscience, and many other attributes of a divine person.

(Again he says) I cannot imagine how anyone can think that the Second Man covers all that is true of the Son.

As the Second Man, he practically limits Him to what is true in us as well as in Him – what “we have in common with him.” (See *Some Letters of F.E.R.*, pp. 4, 5, 6), and in connection with this negation of divine attributes, he brings in “the position of mediation, which belongs to the Man Christ Jesus” (p. 7). Why is this? Have we forgotten the touchstone given by the apostle John (1. John 4:1–3), “every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God”? Moreover, Paul tells us concerning spiritual manifestations, that “no one can say *Lord Jesus* unless in the power of the Holy Spirit” (1Cor 12:3). Again, Peter speaks of false teachers “who shall bring in by the bye destructive heresies, and deny the *Master* that bought them” (2Pet 2:1–10). These are they that despise lordship, and speak injuriously of dignities. Jude characterizes them as turning the grace of God into dissoluteness, and denying the only *Master* and our Lord Jesus Christ. These Scriptures clearly show that it is the lordship of Jesus in His mediatorial position – the Second Man, the Man Christ Jesus – that is so resisted by the spirit of evil, seeking as he does place and power in the Church itself (1Tim 4:1–3; 2Tim 3:1–9).

If the truth of Christ’s humanity or of His person as “Second Man,” “Son of Man,” can be separated in the minds of Christians from divine attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience, &c. (not to speak of self-existence), then Satan could boldly assume lordship, for, if this were true, he would have to meet One who was not all-powerful nor all-wise. But what does Scripture say? The One who ascends up where He was before is none other than the “Son of Man.” It is the “Son of Man” who is in heaven [John 3:13], though the lowly Man on earth. He it was who “knew all men,” who “Himself knew what was in man,” and could say, “I say unto thee, we speak that which we know, “and we bear witness of that which we have seen.” Does not this bespeak omniscience? Authority is given Him to execute judgment also, “because He is the Son of Man,” [John 5] even as the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins – omnipotence, surely, yet it is the Son of Man. It is by believing on the Son of Man that we have eternal life, and the rejected Son of Man, lifted up, is the gathering point and center of all (compare John 8:28; 12:31–36), and test of everything for God. How dare anyone say that the Second Man has not omnipotence, omniscience, and other divine attributes!

What divine attribute is lacking to the Son of Man when He comes as the “Ancient of Days”? (compare Dan 7:13, 22). And who is this Man, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who comes, but the blessed and only Potentate, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light unapproachable, whom no man has seen, nor is able to see? to whom be honor and eternal

might. Amen. (Compare 1Tim 6:15–16; Rev 19:11–16).

But one may oppose that this is not His character for the Christian. Who, then, is it but the Son of Man who is seen among the seven golden lamps? [Rev 1]. And is He not characterized by omnipotence, omniscience, self-existence, and many other attributes of a divine Person? Surely so! Divine righteousness girds Him about; He bears conspicuously the proof of eternity of existence; omnipotence speaks in His voice, and all the ministry of light by the Holy Ghost is wielded by His right hand. He stands in the consuming power of God's judgment which tests everything – a judgment which the word of His mouth exercises.

As to His Person, first of all deity is His and self-existence (that which Mr. Raven specially denies); He is the Living One! True, He become dead; but He lives to eternity, and has the keys of death and the grave – than which there can be no fuller expression of omnipotence. All this is specifically what characterizes Him as Son of Man. In the house of God, as in the kingdom, it is the Son of Man who is seen to be a divine Person – a Man to whom deity and all divine attributes belong (compare Heb 2:8–9, 3:3– 4, with Psa. 8:1).

If anyone object that Mr. Raven would perhaps allow the Son of Man to possess divine attributes, but insists that the Second Man *does not* possess omnipotence, &c., I would first ask what warrant is there in Scripture for such an evil dissection of the truth of Christ's Person? And secondly, I would point out that he distinctly classes the Second Man and the Son of Man, together, and that to do so is a part of his specific system of teaching. He says,

Now that the "Son of Man," "the Second Man," and "Eternal Life," have, so to say, taken form, Scripture shows that they "are from heaven,"

and he quotes as proof John 3:13 and 6:62, which precisely refer to the Son of Man. Moreover, the living corn of wheat, who died and brought forth much fruit after His kind [John 12:24], was none other than the Son of Man. Well might J. N. D., in the quotation given by Mr. A. [Anstey] (*Reply to the German Brethren*, p. 2), insist upon the distinction between the Person of the Son, and the believer as receiving life from Him; and that the Son of Man, who is in heaven, speaks of Christ as a divine Person, with whom the believer cannot be identified so as to possess omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, which attach alone to Him! But what would J. N. D. say to Mr. Raven who actually denies these divines attributes to the Second Man Himself?

In the Scriptures above quoted the Son of Man on earth is positively identified as an omnipresent and eternal Person, not an eternal humanity, but the same divine Person, though now Man, for He came down from heaven and is in heaven [John 3:13], yet ascends up thither [John 20:17], and was in heaven before ascending. Faith bows with joy and adoration, and presumes not to reason. Mr. Raven, however, believes that the "Son of Man, the Second

Man (though not yet revealed) was ever essentially and in purpose in the Son.

He

has become it . . . Now that the "Son of Man," "the Second Man," and Eternal life have,

so to say, taken form, Scripture shows that they are from heaven.

For him the Son of Man is an “it,” and together with the Second Man and Eternal life, forms a “they,” essentially ever in the Son, which now, having taken form, are distinct from deity, and destitute of divine attributes though from heaven and of the Son; and, as to Eternal life, it is, he says, an “integral part” of His Person. Thus what is true in Him is true in us. He says:

Christ is the Second Man, and there is that which we have in common with Him. We are “all of one” (*Some Letters*, pp. 5–6).

And in order that this might be fitted in to Mr. Raven’s system, he declares that the Second Man does not cover all that is true of the Son, and that as such divine attributes do not attach to Him, viz., omnipotence, omniscience, self-existence, &c. That is to say, Mr. R. fears not to deny the attributes of a divine Person to this blessed One, as Second Man, because grace associates us with Him as “all of one”! Who, then, is this Son of Man that was lifted up that we might have eternal life? Deity and every divine attribute is His, else were the value of His deity eliminated from the atonement He made. This teaching dissolves, so to speak, the Person of Christ into parts, whether integral or essential, destroys true propitiation, and introduces into Christianity an essence – eternal, but not deity¹ – ever the Second Man, but having taken form, not including divine attributes, nor covering all that is true of the Son! Scripture abhors such theorizing.

This, again, is the stepping-stone to a further statement by Mr. Raven (*Some Letters*, p. 13). He says:

What they saw was man after the flesh in divine perfectness before God. (Again), What came under the eye of God and before the eyes of man, apart from fruits and power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit for service and glimpses of divine glory, was the perfect setting forth of man . . . after the flesh.

What, may I ask, was there in Jesus apart from fruits of the Holy Spirit?

Perfect Man, indeed, He was, and far more – the Son of God, the Christ of God, God manifested in flesh, and never was He apart from this as under the eye of God, or indeed before the eyes of men, however blind they were to it. Those who saw Him were “eye-witnesses of and attendants upon the Word” (Luke 1:2). A miraculous star announces His birth to far off Gentiles. A babe unborn, His great forerunner, who was to make ready for Jehovah a prepared people, leapt in presence of such grace. The angelic hosts fill the heavens to gaze upon that lowly Babe, and own Him as the Lord. The Holy Spirit by Simeon gives testimony that He is God’s Salvation – Jehovah’s Christ. The Magi do Him homage, and the Scriptures put in evidence the eternal ways of Him who is born in Bethlehem. He is the object of the Father’s care, of the Angels’ ministry, and even of Satanic hatred, while on every hand the hearts and consciences of men are aroused. Perfect Man He was, and called a Nazarene – in the likeness, surely, of sinful flesh, come of a woman under the law – a body prepared for Him, but what came under the eye of God was more than “perfect man according to the flesh.” This Adam innocent was; but Christ was that “holy thing” [Luke 1:35] and Adam never was that.

But Mr. Raven separates what Scripture does not. He says:

What came under the eye of God, apart from fruits and power of the anointing of the Holy Ghost, was the perfect setting forth of man according to the flesh;

but Scripture, on the contrary, connects the perfect humanity of Christ with the “fruits and power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.” Never is the fine flour in the meal-offering “apart from” the mingling or the anointing with oil.² May God preserve us from this evil doctrine, which is the negation of the truth of Christ!

A second edition of a letter, by Mr. J. A. Trench, has just been put into my hands, in which much truth is raked together and used to cover the evil of a doctrine of which he has to say:

You will understand that it is not that the expression of the truth in him (Mr. Raven) commends itself to me, nor that I have received or find any help on the subject so much before him in his sentences (p. 1). (Again), Raven is far too one-sided in the way he treats the subject, and . . . does not “preserve the balance of Scripture as to it” (p. 9). (Again), I distrust his systematizing, and do not go with all the details of the development of it, fearing narrowness (p. 13).

Who, then, is the teacher around whom such brethren are gathered to-day? And for whose sake have they rejected the solemn judgment of the two or three gathered to Christ’s Name [at Bexhill, June 29, 1890]? Is it Mr. Trench or Mr. Raven? The former knows perfectly well that he himself is the disciple following and supporting Mr. Raven, and using truth to pander to and shelter the evil doctrine of the latter. For instance, Mr. Trench says:

there is the determination to construe all that Raven says in the worst sense even if it seem capable of another (p. 1).

But should a teacher use words bearing the worst construction, even if, as a possible alternative, they may seem capable of another sense? Thus, according to Mr. J. A. Trench, Raven’s words have, or may have, a double sense, one the worst and the other good, or at least not so bad. Mr. J. C. Trench went even farther than this in his defense of Raven (*Reply to One in Difficulty*, p. 5) where he gives the senses of “involve” meaning “to result in,” and “is essential to,” and “has the capacity of” (three entirely different expressions), to the word “means,” used by Mr. Raven in the sentence “eternal life *means* for a Christian a wholly new order of things.” Such futile playing upon words exposes fully the spirit of partisanship at work, and causes Mr. J. A. Trench’s animadversions to recoil with tenfold force upon himself.

In p. 4 of this recent letter of Mr. J. A. T.’s, in reply to Mr. Rule, he has a remarkably good statement as to the glory of the Second Man. He says:

The Second Man, last Adam, is the central subject of Scripture . . .
If He fills all in all, it is not as God, but as He who has been raised from the dead.
. . . Not to angels, but to man – the Second Man, I need hardly say - Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet . . . every ray of the glory of God concentrated upon the face for ever, once more marred then that of any man.

Here evidently the Second Man is a divine Person, with divine attributes, and divine glory; but suppose Mr. Raven's bad doctrine were tacked on to this extract, viz., that "What characterizes the Second Man could not include all that is true of a divine Person, such as self-existence (having life in Himself), omnipotence, omniscience, and many other attributes of a divine Person"! It would deny and stultify all that J. A. Trench previously said. His tract indeed is but daubing the evil with the good – the wall with untempered mortar. Forms of piety are thus used to set aside the glory of Christ as Man.

Mr. J. A. Trench writes much that is good, and speaks well of the supremacy, and deity, and divine glory, and attributes of the Second Man, but why does he speak so? It is in effect to force upon the saints a doctrine that absolutely denies divine attributes, such as omniscience, self-existence, omnipotence, and "many other attributes of a divine Person" to the Second Man – a doctrine that asserts that "the Second Man does not cover all that is true of the Son."

Such doctrines may indeed suit Mr. R., and his followers, but Scripture contradicts this statement in both its parts, for the blessed Savior adjured by the living God to say if He was the Christ, the Son of God, replied "Thou hast said. Moreover, I say to you, from henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:63–64). Thus He identifies the Son of God, and Son of Man, and predicates omnipotence, precisely of the latter. Scripture is everywhere consistent in its testimony to this. In reply to His enquiry, "Who do men say that I the Son of Man am?" Peter, by the revelation of *the Father*, could say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." True He was to go away to Jerusalem and suffer, but raised from the dead, the Son of Man would "come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Matt. 16:13–28). The Son of Man was Son of the Father. Grace had brought Him into the world the first time, and His second advent would be characterized by glory, but His Person was the same unchangeably. For if the Son of Man takes the kingdom, it is He the Christ, who gives up the kingdom to Him who is *God and Father*, and then shall *the Son* also Himself be placed in subjection to Him who put all things in subjection to Him (1Cor 15:20–28). Here it is "the Son Himself" who is placed in subjection, and it is also "the Son" that can do nothing of Himself, but does this deny His omnipotence? Surely not. Nor is omniscience denied to "the Son" by the Scripture that states "of that day or of that hour (of the coming of the Son of Man) no one knows, neither the angels who are in heaven, *nor the Son*, but the Father only" [Mark 13:32]. On the other hand it is "the Son of Man" whom the angels serve (John 1:51), and to whom every knee shall bow.

I fearlessly assert that there is no Scripture, and no Scriptural warrant, for denying divine attributes to the Second Man; if there is, let them produce it. The statement as it stands, rests merely upon the "I cannot imagine" of a man.

But more, all Scripture is consistent in its testimony to the positive deity and divine attributes of the Son of Man. Nor could it be otherwise. Scripture reveals the objects of faith, and faith receives and knows them as they really are before God. It does not systematize Scripture, which is in fact subjecting the truth to the mind of man, and thus is infidel in its tendency, and leaves God out. Into this error these teachers have fallen. On the contrary faith, however instructed and intelligent – for there is such a thing as unintelligent faith -ever sees as God sees, and for Him, Christ, the last Adam, the Second Man, the Son of Man, the Son of David though David's Lord, Son of God, Son of the Father, is ever the same blessed Person to

whom deity and divine attributes absolutely belong, whatever the character and position He may assume, and however He may in grace empty Himself to become Man, and indeed humble Himself, even unto death, and that the death of the cross.

Footnotes

[1] [That is, FER held, as we may call it, a humanity-in-essence, and an eternal life-in-essence, ever in the Son eternally, though not part of deity.]

[2] An apparent exception is found in Lev 23, but notice the difference between v. 13 and v. 17. In the latter case the loaves were “baken with leaven.”