

# New Testament Pattern



Foundations in New Testament Criticism

An Exegetical Enquiry into the  
 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' Dualism  
 Jean-Louis Leuba



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Hardback ISBN: 978 0 227 17856 0

Paperback ISBN: 978 0 227 17857 7

PDF ISBN: 978 0 227 17833 1

ePub ISBN: 978 0 227 17834 8

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CB12NT

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[www.jamesclarke.co](http://www.jamesclarke.co)

[publishing@jamesclarke.co.uk](mailto:publishing@jamesclarke.co.uk)

Hardback ISBN 978 0 227 17856 0

Paperback ISBN 978 0 227 17857 7

PDF ISBN 978 0 227 17833 1

ePub ISBN 978 0 227 17834 8

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:*

A catalogue record is available from the British Library.

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First published by James Clarke & Co., 1953

This edition published 2022

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# Contents

Introduction	7
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## Part One: The Christ

Chapter 1. Christological Dualism	9
1. The Two Categories of Titles of Jesus: Institutional and Spiritual	9
2. Theology of Christological Dualism	17
(i) <i>Original Institution and Event</i>	
(ii) <i>Particularism and Universalism</i>	
(iii) <i>Physical and Moral Aspects</i>	
(iv) <i>Plan and Content of the Drama of Redemption</i>	
(v) <i>Eschatological Institution and Event</i>	
Chapter 2. The Unity of the Christ	32
1. The Christ is the Lord	33
(i) <i>Conception and Birth</i>	
(ii) <i>The Ministry</i>	
(iii) <i>Passion and Death</i>	
(iv) <i>The Resurrection</i>	
2. The Lord is the Christ	42
(i) <i>Conception and Birth</i>	
(ii) <i>The Ministry</i>	
(iii) <i>Passion and Death</i>	
(iv) <i>The Resurrection</i>	

## Part Two: The Apostles

Chapter 1. Apostolic Dualism	51
1. The Institutional Apostolate of the Twelve and the Spiritual Apostolate of Paul	51
2. Theology of Apostolic Dualism	55
(i) <i>The Two Ministries and Christ</i>	
(ii) <i>The Two Ministries and Israel</i>	
(iii) <i>The Two Ministries and the Spirit</i>	
(iv) <i>The Two Ministries and the Church</i>	
Chapter 2. The Unity of the Apostles	67

- |                                                                       |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. The Union of the Twelve with Paul                                  | 68 |
| (i) <i>The Recognition of the Ministry of Paul by the Twelve</i>      |    |
| (ii) <i>The Recognition of the Gospel of Paul by the Twelve</i>       |    |
| 2. The Union of Paul with the Twelve                                  | 78 |
| (i) <i>Paul's Recognition of the Ministry of the Twelve</i>           |    |
| (ii) <i>Paul's Recognition of the Primitive Evangelical Tradition</i> |    |

### **Part Three: The Church**

Chapter 1. Ecclesiastical Dualism	93
1. The Institutional Church of Jewish Christianity and the Spiritual Church of Gentile Christianity	93
2. The Theological Basis of Ecclesiastical Dualism	96
(i) <i>The Two Churches and Israel</i>	
(ii) <i>Foundation and Rise of the Church</i>	
(iii) <i>Sacrosanct Centre and the Congregational Principle</i>	
(iv) <i>Tradition and Inspiration</i>	
(v) <i>Offices and Charismatic Ministries</i>	
Chapter 2. The Unity of the Church	111
1. The Union of the Jewish Christian with the Gentile Christian Church	112
(i) <i>The Historical Expression of the Recognition of the             Gentile Christian Church by the Jewish Christians</i>	
(ii) <i>The Theological Significance of the Recognition of the             Gentile Christian Church by the Jewish Christians</i>	
2. The Union of the Gentile Christian with the Jewish Christian Church	117
(i) <i>The Historical Expression of the Recognition of the             Jewish Christian Church by the Gentile Christians</i>	
(ii) <i>The Theological Significance of the Recognition of             the Jewish Christian Church by the Gentile Christians</i>	
Conclusion	127
1. Institution and Event According to the New Testament	127
(i) <i>The Covenant and its Renewal</i>	
(ii) <i>Creation and Redemption</i>	
(iii) <i>Orthodox Unity</i>	
2. The Perpetual Validity of the Fundamental New Testament Dualism	137
Notes	143

# Introduction

At the ecumenical conference of Amsterdam (1948), it appeared that the knottiest of theological problems in regard to the reunion of the churches arose from the doctrinal opposition between Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>1</sup>

The catholic position implies the continuity of the Church, its institutional character and the many consequences which result from that fact – a sacramental idea of the ministry, the value of tradition, the emphasis (no doubt under various forms) on apostolical succession.

The protestant position stresses, on the other hand, the liberty of the Holy Spirit, the ever-renewed initiatives by which God in His Word judges, corrects, sustains, recreates and consoles His Church, the universal priesthood and the charismatic nature of all forms of the ministry.

In the following study we would like to point to certain aspects of the New Testament witness which may make a useful contribution to this ecumenical debate. If the New Testament, along with the Old Testament of which it is the fulfilment, is the canon and rule of the Church, we shall try to consult it with so much the more objectivity, detachment and hope because the questions at stake are so much the more vital and controversial.

We have purposely refrained from exceeding the limits of a New Testament study. In our concluding section, we have confined ourselves to indicating the conditions under which the exegetical results arrived at would be valid for systematic theology and ecclesiology: we have not, however, developed those results dogmatically. Such dogmatic exposition, necessary as it is, can only be attempted on the basis of canonical testimony, from which it must stem. To prevent as far as possible the examination of the New Testament witness being disturbed by the desire or fear of ensuing consequences, it is of the highest importance to concentrate one's attention, in the first place, upon the New Testament data themselves and upon them alone.

A further word about the bearing and the limitations of historical hypotheses for Biblical theology. With regard to Christology, the apostolate and the Church – theological subjects with which we shall be especially concerned – as with regard to the New Testament as a whole, certain New Testament data have often been considered to be the term of a process of development, or even the expression of a later theory very different from the original facts. In several concrete cases,<sup>2</sup> we shall see that certain historical hypotheses sometimes raise more problems than they solve. But that is not the point, so far as Biblical theology is concerned. Ingenious, and probable or not, historical hypotheses belong to a different category from that of theological study. In exalting as its guide the Canon of Scripture, the early Church did not intend to canonize only the point of departure of ecclesiastical and theological development, but the entire trend of this development (including the later theories, attested by canonical texts, which might be an integral part of it) up to the close of the canonical period.<sup>3</sup> No one will deny that historical study, with its inevitable and legitimate share of conjecture, is essential for the understanding of this development. But what the Church and the theologian will refuse to do is to trust in historical study for the decision as to what is canonical and what is no longer so. That decision has been made once for all. The Reformed Church above all, so justly proud of the Scriptural basis of its theology, will do well to remember it.

## Chapter 1

## Christological Dualism

**1. The Two Categories of Titles of Jesus: Institutional and Spiritual**

If we review the various titles which Jesus bears in the New Testament, we discover that they are divisible into two groups. From the start, the evangelical “kerygma” is built up on the basis of a twofold affirmation: Jesus is the Son of David and He is also the Son of Man. Jesus is the Son of David. The sick sometimes call upon him by that title (Matt. 9:27, 15:22, 20:30-31 = Mark 10:47-48 = Luke 18:38-39). The crowd wonders whether He is not the Son of David (Matt. 12:23). It is by that title that He is greeted on His entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9, 15) He is “born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3), sprung of the house of David (2 Tim. 2:8), of the stock of David (Acts 13:23). He is the (lawful) son of Joseph and Joseph is the son of David (Matt. 1:20), He is of the house of David (Luke 1:27, 69, 2:4). God will give him the throne of David His father (Luke 1:32).

Modern critics have tried to cast doubt upon the historicity of the Davidic origins of Jesus. Apart from their general suspicion of evangelical tradition, their arguments can be reduced to two: the silence of St. John’s Gospel at a point where we should have expected him to state with precision the Davidic origin of Jesus (John 7:41-42) and the synoptic passage: Matt. 22:41-46 = Mark 12:35-37 = Luke 20:41-44.

With regard to John 7:41-42, Goguel has posed the problem very well. “The idea of the Davidic descent of Jesus postulated by Jewish dogma was so widespread from the start and was considered so important that it cannot possibly have been unknown to John. Does the denial of that descent implied in effect by the passage 7:41-42, arise from the fact that he will have known an authentic tradition according to which Jesus

was not the Son of David or must one explain it by the desire to detach Christians from Jewish ideas?"<sup>1</sup> He decides in favour of the first hypothesis, basing his opinion on Matt. 22:41-46 where, according to the interpretation he considers most likely, "Jesus denies that the Messiah must descend from David". For Goguel, "it is difficult to understand why it should not be made clear how the question of Jesus, Matt. 22:43-44 may be answered from the point of view of belief in Davidic descent."<sup>2</sup> If the matter stands thus, the objection of Bousset<sup>3</sup> and of Bultmann,<sup>4</sup> noted by Goguel himself,<sup>5</sup> remains: "If Jesus had spoken as the Synoptics describe, the conception of the Davidic Messiah could not have arisen."

Thus we should have to admit either, with Bousset and Bultmann, that this text is spurious and late, or else, with Goguel, that the Davidic descent, attested fairly early in Rom. 1:3, in spite of the Word of Jesus which denied it, "is a result of the influence exercised by Jewish Messianic dogmatics on the development of Christian Christology".<sup>6</sup> Since it certainly seems too easy a solution to doubt the authenticity of Matt. 22:41-46, it would be best to adopt the view of Goguel. But how are we validly to sustain it, when we recollect that Paul, in particular, did not make much use of the Davidic origin of Jesus? Why should he have included it in the greeting of Rom. 1:1-7, so pregnant with theological significance, if it had not already been an essential part of the primitive Gospel tradition? Moreover, if the Davidic descent of Jesus had been a debatable point, would not the Pharisees have attacked it, and would not Paul have given it a more secure foundation? The terseness of his notice is but the more significant.<sup>7</sup>

It is much more natural, with K.-L. Schmidt,<sup>8</sup> not to see in Matt. 22:41-46 the negation of the Davidic origin of the Messiah. It is a question by which, according to His habit, Jesus wished to entangle His interlocutors who were not yet ready to enter into the secrets of God.

Furthermore, if Davidic Messianism is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, it is affirmed in Revelation (5:5, 22:16), admittedly in a somewhat different form but in one which leaves us in no doubt about the Davidic origin of Jesus. Granted the similarity of origin and at times identity of authorship

which scholars once again – not without reason – have begun to recognize between the Gospel and the Revelation of John,<sup>9</sup> we shall not be over-hasty to infer an absolute silence which, even if it were a fact, would not in any way disprove the positive witness of the Synoptics and of Paul. As for the silence of the Gospel of John itself, it will naturally be attributed to the tendency of this writing which emphasizes the discrepancy between the two categories of titles rather than the continuity which links them. It will, however, be noted that Jesus is called “the King of Israel” (1:49) and that the Fourth Gospel stresses, more even than the Synoptics, the title “King of the Jews” which was given to Jesus (John 19:19-22).

Jesus is the “Son of Man”, the Barnasha of Dan. 7:13. Let us remind ourselves that the title is found sixty-nine times in the Synoptics (thirty-eight after the pruning of Synoptic criticism), thirteen times in John and once in the Acts (7:56). In the Gospels, it always occurs on the lips of Jesus. Apart from a few passages where the context does not allow us to decide the exact bearing of the use of the term,<sup>10</sup> we may group under three heads the Gospel texts concerning the Son of Man.

#### A. The heavenly origin and destiny of the Son of Man. Eschatological character of His Second Coming in judgment.

Matt. 10:23, 13:37, 41, 16:27 = Mark 8:38 = Luke 9:26

Matt. 16:28, 19:28, 25:31

Matt. 24:27 = Luke 17:24

Matt. 24:30 = Mark 13:26 = Luke 21:27

Matt. 24:37 = Luke 17:26

Matt. 24:39 = Luke 17:30

Matt. 24:44 = Luke 12:40

Matt. 26:64 = Mark 14:62 = Luke 22:69

Luke 12:8, 17:22, 18:8, 21:36

John 1:51, 3:13, 6:62, 3:14, 8:28, 12:34, 5:27, 6:27, 6:53,  
12:23, 13:31<sup>11</sup>

#### B. Suffering, Death and (occasionally) the Resurrection of the Son of Man.

Matt. 12:40 = Luke 11:30

Matt. 17:9 = Mark 9:9

Matt. 17:12 = Mark 9:12  
 Matt. 17:22-23 = Mark 9:31 = Luke 9:44  
 Matt. 20:18-19 = Mark 10:33-34 = Luke 18:31-33  
 Matt. 20:28 = Mark 10:45  
 Matt. 26:2  
 Matt. 26:24 = Mark 14:21 = Luke 22:22  
 Matt. 26:45 = Mark 14:41  
 Mark 8:31 = Luke 9:22  
 Luke 19:10, 22:48, 24:7

### C. The Present Power and Liberty of the Son of Man.

Matt. 8:20 = Luke 9:58  
 Matt. 9:6 = Mark 2:10 = Luke 5:24  
 Matt. 11:19 = Luke 7:34  
 Matt. 12:8 = Mark 2:28 = Luke 6:5  
 John 9:35

Thus primitive Christology seems to revolve around two essential titles: on the one hand, Jesus is the descendant and successor of David, on the other hand He is a heavenly transcendent man intervening suddenly in the life of Israel, of the nations and of the whole cosmos and accomplishing His eschatological work in the power of God and of the Spirit of God. From the very beginnings of New Testament Christology, two distinct lines of development emerge: one which we will call *institutional* and another which may be termed *spiritual*.

#### *The Institutional Titles*

As Son of David, Jesus shares in the *royalty of David* (Mark 11:10; Luke 1:32; Acts 13:23; Rev. 3:7). Consequently He is the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2, 27:11, 29, 37; Mark 15:2, 9, 12; Luke 23:3, 37, 38; John 18:33, 39, 19:3, 14, 15, 19, 21) the King of Israel (Matt. 27:42; Mark 15:32; John 1:49, 12:13). He is the legal Heir, and the descendant "after the flesh" (Rom. 1:3) of the Davidic dynasty which was promised perpetuity (cf. 2 Sam. 7).

This same element of institutional continuity is seen in the use which the Synoptics make of the titles Christ and Son of God.

The Christ must be born at Bethlehem (Matt. 2:4-6; cf. John 7:42), city of Judah, the place from which the house of David springs (cf. 1 Sam. 16:1 ff.). He is Himself, as the Christ, a descendant of King David (Matt. 1:1, 6). The very existence of the Christ implies the Lordship of David (Matt. 22:42 = Mark 12:35 = Luke 20:41). He is the Christ, the King of Israel (Mark 15:32). Never do we find coupled together the Christ and the Son of Man. On the contrary, the title "the Christ" is clearly quite different from that of the Son of Man. When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ (Matt. 16:16 = Mark 8:29 = Luke 9:20) Jesus received and endorsed his confession (Matt. 16:17). But the immediate sequel to the story shows that this confession in no wise implied for Peter the recognition of the Son of Man who suffers and rises again (Mark 8:31-33 = Luke 9:22; cf. Matt. 16:21-23). We find the same absence of the title "Christ" in the second and third predictions of the Passion, which are concerned solely with the Son of Man (Matt. 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45; Matt. 20:17-19 = Mark 10:32-34 = Luke 18:31-34). There is the same brusque transition from the Christ to the Son of Man in the Passion narratives as in the first prediction. In answering the question of the High Priest: "I adjure Thee by the living God, to tell us if Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63; cf. Mark 14:61 and Luke 22:67), Jesus, after the ambiguous "Thou hast said", comes at once to quite a different affirmation, relative to the Son of Man. To be sure, after the Resurrection, the title "Christ" will be linked with facts which are characteristic of the Son of Man: suffering, death and resurrection (cf. Luke 24:26, 46; Acts 2:31, 3:18, 17:3, 26:23; 1 Cor. 15:3-4). The fact is, as we shall see, that it will have been filled with a new content, richer than that of the former, purely institutional, title of the Christ, the Son of David. This new circle of ideas will mould the Christology of Paul. But it can be properly understood only by following, as we shall attempt to do, the series of divine events which gave birth to it and of which the receptacle was the purely institutional idea of the Christ the Son of David.

The title Son of God, before the Resurrection, may likewise be classified among the institutional titles, following that of the

Christ. The association of the Christ with the Son of God is in fact of fairly frequent occurrence in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 16:16, 26:63 = Mark 14:61; Luke 22:67-70, Luke 4:41; John 11:27). The difference we have noted above between the Christ and the Son of Man thus brings about an identical difference between the Son of God and the Son of Man (cf. especially Matt. 16:16 and Matt. 16:21-23 which equally throws into relief the antithesis Son of God – Son of Man). We may also cite the association of Son of God and King of Israel (Matt. 27:42-43; John 1:49) and the identification of the Christ with the King of Israel, Mark 15:32. Like the title of the Christ, that of Son of God will receive after the Resurrection a new significance far richer than that which it possessed originally. It will reflect the eternal, heavenly, unique character of the Son of Man and of the Lord (cf. Rom. 8:3, 8:32; Col. 1:13, etc., and several passages of John which bear traces of the doctrinal implications of the Resurrection and its resultant Christology: John 1:18, 3:16, etc., 1 John 4:9-10, 4:14-15, etc.).

### *Spiritual Titles*

The institutional titles which so far have been under discussion, all of them bear witness to a static and, as it were, dynastic conception of the Person of Jesus. Jesus is the descendant of David, the heir of a long and carefully prepared ancestry, of a royalty which He possesses by divine right.

We now come to three titles which characterize Jesus in quite a different way. They are: Son of Man, Kyrios (Lord) and Servant (of the Eternal).

We call them spiritual because all three of them suggest a conception of the Person of Jesus which attaches great importance to the ever renewed, transcendent and cataclysmic action of the Spirit of God.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to the title Son of Man, we may note as characteristic the fact that in the Gospels it always occurs on the lips of Jesus. This in itself implies that we have here not a static, generally accepted, official, notion, but a notion which is original, unforeseen, fraught with dynamic creative power. The three big categories of texts relative to the Son of Man confirm

this observation.<sup>13</sup> In them it is a question of the supreme manifestation of divine life and activity in the Person of Jesus, whether it be in the eschatological work of Jesus (texts A), whether it be by His suffering, death and resurrection (texts B), whether it be by His present power and freedom in regard to the contingencies of this world (texts C).

Further, the title “Kyrios” bears witness to the miraculous, transcendent character of the divine action at work in Jesus. “The Kyrios is He by whom God has intervened in the world with saving power.”<sup>14</sup> This intervention is especially manifest in the Resurrection.<sup>15</sup> The name Kyrios “conferred by God (see Phil. 2:5-11) indicates divine reality in its entirety, the divine person and being”.<sup>16</sup> Hence it is quite understandable that such a title should have a far greater theological significance in the Epistles than in the Gospels; in other words, after the Resurrection rather than before it.<sup>17</sup>

The title Servant (of the Eternal) is much less frequent in the New Testament. It is found *expressis verbis* only in five passages: Matt. 12:18 (quoting Is. 42:1) Acts 3:13, 26, 4:27, 30. But the conception of the ministry of Jesus which it implies occupies a much larger place in the New Testament than the small number of passages in which it is explicitly used would lead us to suppose.<sup>18</sup> This title too bears witness to the transcendent action of God in Jesus the Servant (Acts 3:13, 26) – an action which does not spring from the Person of the Servant Himself, but depends continuously upon the living initiative of God. That is why this title is set alongside that of prophet (Acts 3:22; cf. 7:37).<sup>19</sup>

Son of David, King of the Jews, King of Israel, Christ, Son of God, on the one hand, Son of Man, Kyrios and Servant on the other, do not exhaust the titles given to Jesus in the New Testament. But these are the titles which occur most frequently and are of the highest Christological significance. They express that Christological dualism which we shall explain later. The other titles given to Jesus could all be included in one or other of these two fundamental lines of development of the primitive Christological kerygma, if they do not imply that fusion of the two categories which we have already suggested in regard to the meaning which the titles Christ and the Son of God bear