IT IS THROUGH THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST that God has poured himself out without hindrance. He has done so in all the generosity of his grace, and all the richness of his glory. In the Incarnation he has unveiled his kindness, his long-suffering and his pardoning of all mankind’s foolishness; he has also disclosed his redemptive love for all the sons of men, and he has declared to man a new life, indeed a very new life which includes an actual new birth: “But to all who received him who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn 1:13).

In Christ, God no longer deals with us through curtains and darkness, through symbols and dreams, nor through a gulf that cannot be crossed. He no longer deals with us through a “stiff-necked people” (i.e. Israel), nor through words or commandments transmitted by means of God himself as another “Person” and then shaped by a prophet or the mouth of a man who God himself is unable to practice what he preaches. Through Christ the Son of Man we are able to hear God directly and universally, receiving his grace freely and boundlessly. We receive this neither by ear as something actually heard, nor as a word to be conceived by intelligence and through learning; rather we receive it by the action of the Spirit, by the mystery of God’s descending among us in person, and the mystery of the divine power which is inwardly active in man—the divine power which is a persuasion that surpasses all power of reason and illumines one’s insight for the renewal of creation.

When Christ insists on calling himself the Son of Man, he means to draw our attention to the fact that he has chosen to reveal himself to us apart from a specific age, a particular nation, a certain people, tribe, family, and even apart from a special prophet, as any one of these would tend to monopolize God, fixing him to a certain time and place. Rather, God is revealed in the “Son of Man” in the most basic meaning of the term, and in this way it is possible for God in Christ to be for all people; Christ’s humanity encompasses all the attributes, the special characteristics, and mankind’s weaknesses as well. From under this humble title, “Son of Man,” Christ is raised high above the pinnacle of humanity, and from there he embraces all mankind, gathering all
souls within himself along with all they possess both inside and out. It was in such a context that St Paul referred to Christ as “[Adam] the second man... from heaven” (1 Cor 15:47). It is Christ who is the Father of the new creation “who fills all in all” (Eph 1:23). So it was that he became Salvation and Redemption seen “in the flesh” and thus not beyond the reach of anybody.

Certain circumstances, however, did not exclude a sudden pulling back of the curtain; there were times when it was lifted and his identity was disclosed. We read, for example, about that blind man whose sight Jesus restored, that, “Jesus heard that they had cast him [the blind man] out, and having found him he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe;’ and he worshipped him” (Jn 9:35-38). Thus it can be seen that the universal “humanness” of Christ, the Son of Man, was not a hindrance to Christ or the blind man; Christ was able to reveal his sonship to God to the blind man and get acquainted with him from behind this curtain.

But perhaps the most magnificent scene of the Son of Man still awaits us, namely when the heavens will be rent open and the angels appear. According to the promise of the angels in the Book of Acts, he will come again just as he ascended: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). And Jesus himself said, “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven” (Mk 13:24-27).

Christ came in great meekness and humility manifested in the form of a Son of Man; he was born in a manger in Bethlehem, and he bore all the sins and suffering of man in order to endow our creation with a mystical birth from above. If his first coming was thus, then his second coming at the end of time will be in this same form, i.e. the Son of Man, but no longer will he be suffering and vicariously bearing our sins. Rather Christ will appear at the summit of his glory and the divine revelation will be “with great power and glory” in which he will gather his elect. It is then, and only then, that everyone will see—not by theory, argument, or proof, but with open vision and a commonly shared self-conviction—indeed, everyone will see the extent of the honor, glory, freedom, and eternal life that humanity has acquired in the person of Christ, the Son of Man.
Christ: Son of God

It would have been impossible to reveal the Fatherhood of God in any other way except through a real Sonship manifested in actuality: hence, Christ's Incarnation. And this transcended mystery is recognized through his supernatural deeds and attributes. As St John the Apostle says, “We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (Jn 1:14). Testimony of this also came from heaven above as God’s Fatherhood to Christ was revealed as he emerged from the waters of the River Jordan at his Baptism: “Thou art my Beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased” (Mk 1:11); Jn 1:34). This was the first clear and audible sign from heaven to reveal God’s essential Fatherhood to Christ. From that time onwards God’s good will towards men has been poured out profusely and generously over the whole of mankind: “For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father” (Jn 16:27).

Christ called out “O Father,” a phrase which indicates an essential and subjective relationship to God. Any other man may call “Our Father,” in the plural, thus indicating a collective adoption in the person of Jesus Christ the only son. And so there is a difference between Christ's essential Sonship to God and the sonship of all believers by adoption in Christ. This is also shown by Christ's saying “My Father and your Father” (Jn 20:17), but never did he say, “Our Father—a Father to me and to you, all of us together.” No, his Sonship and our sonship were never at the same level. The relationship between himself and the Father, Christ always kept as unique and distinguished; and in the very essence of its nature this relationship declares itself to be one of deep intimacy. In his last hour we hear him calling, “Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee” (Jn 17:1). In another place he also calls out, “Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made” (Jn 17:5).

In many other places in the Gospel Christ, in relation to God, declares himself as the Son, the only begotten, which is a way of expressing the concept of the only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish” (Jn 8:16), “He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (Jn 3:18). “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand” (Jn 3:35), “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (Jn 3:36).

(1974)  To be continued