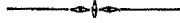


Lord is building the house and keeping the city ; and at the end of our meditations and confessions we may confidently add the words : " Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory upon their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us : and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."



ART. III.—OUR LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING HIMSELF—II.

(2) *Jesus is the Son of God.*

1. **I**N considering the application of the title—" Son of God"—to Jesus, let us first glance at the usage in the Synoptical Gospels, and then in St. John's Gospel.

(1) In the former there is no passage in which Jesus explicitly calls Himself " Son of God." Nevertheless, He does so by implication, and He accepts the title when given to Him by others.

He names or addresses God as the Father in Matthew twenty-one times, in Mark thirteen, in Luke twelve. It is remarkable that in regard to His relation with God Jesus never classes Himself with other men. He says, " My Father " and " Your Father," but never " Our Father," except when He bade the disciples pray " Our Father." Nor is there a single instance in which Jesus includes man with Himself, as alike " Sons of God." Certainly, these things point to a uniqueness in the sonship of Our Lord.

In two parables—that of the Vineyard and of the Marriage Feast—Jesus represents Himself as the Son, and by implication the Son of God.

The title is applied to our Lord under very different circumstances, and doubtless with considerable variety of significance. Thus the demoniacs addressed Him as the Son of God, with some perverted sense of His power ; Satan challenged Him to prove Himself the Son of God ; the centurion, moved by what he saw at the cross, declared Him to be a Son of God, perhaps with his heathen conception of a hero or demi-god.

All the Synoptics relate the testimony of the Father, given at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration, in varying form—" Thou art my Beloved Son."

There were two notable occasions upon which Jesus accepted the title : First, when St. Peter made his first confession, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of God," and our Lord approved it as a truth divinely taught ; and, secondly, when, to the

high priest's solemn interrogation, "I adjure Thee by the Living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God," our Lord replied, "I am."

There were also two remarkable occasions when our Lord, at least by clear implication, asserted His sonship. The first was when He confounded the Pharisees with the dilemma they refused to face: "If David calleth Him Lord, how is He His son?" Even Strauss is compelled to admit in the words "the presupposition of a higher nature existing in the Messiah, in virtue of which He was, indeed, according to the flesh, a descendant of David, but, according to the Spirit, a higher essence proceeding directly from God."

The second was when our Lord gave utterance to the remarkable words recorded in Matt. xi. 27 and Luke x. 22: "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father; and no one knoweth the Son save the Father: neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." Some, like Renan, unable to evacuate these words of their profound significance, set them down, in the teeth of all testimony, as a later interpolation. The words, as Bruce affirmed, "take us out of the historical, incarnate life of the Speaker into the sphere of the eternal and divine" ("Expositor," vi. 79). They express, as Fairbairn notes ("Studies in the Life of Christ," pp. 193, 194), "not simply a figurative, but an essential filial relation to God."

Another indication that it was well known that our Lord received and accepted the title is given in the taunt of the Scribes before the cross: "He trusteth on God; let Him deliver Him now, if He desireth Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. xxvii. 43).

(2) Let us turn now to St. John's Gospel. Here we find Him calling God "Father" 34 times, and "the Father" 70 times — together 104 times. Here, also (John xx. 17), we find our Lord's express discrimination of His own relation to the Father from that of others in His message to the disciples by Mary Magdalene, "Go unto My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."

The title "Son of God" is frequently used of our Lord both by Himself and by others. John uses *υἱός*, Son, of Christ alone; men are called *τέκνα*, children.

Twice our Lord calls Himself the only-begotten Son of God, the strongest assertion of His unique relationship to the Father (John iii. 16, 18). The name is also given Him by the Evangelist (John i. 14, 18).

2. Let us now inquire into the origin of the title. This, without controversy, is allowed to be in the Old Testament.

Passing over its casual application to the angels and to men, as God's offspring, made and sustained by Him, we find a two-fold use of the title—the one ethical, the other official and typical.

(1) *The Ethical Use of the Title.*—God's relationship to Israel is thus described. For it was a relationship of grace, of undeserved favour. This was the message Moses bore to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born, and I say unto thee, Let my son go." And Jehovah's words to Hosea (xi. 1) emphasize the grace shown to Israel, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Israel, then, was God's son as the object of His love, the people whom He chose and trained for Himself, and this sonship placed the nation under the obligation of obedience. On this ground Jehovah, through Malachi (i. 6), pleads with His people, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"

From the nation as a whole, which failed in its filial obligations, it was natural that the title should pass to individuals who walked in the fear of the Lord and rendered Him true filial reverence and obedience. And thus in the New Testament it came to be the designation of Christians whose sonship depends upon their relations to the only-begotten Son of God.

(2) The official use of the term seems to have been limited to the Kings of Israel. To some of them, at least, the title was expressly given.

It is probably with reference to David that the Lord, in Ps. lxxxix. 26, 27, says: "He shall cry unto Me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. I also will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."

And of Solomon God said: "I will be his Father, and he shall be to Me a son." And so far as Ps. ii. refers to any earthly prototype of Him who was to come, it is to Solomon that the reference must have been made. But if such a reference existed, the type is merged at once in the great ideal which never was and never could be realized except in *One*. It is noteworthy that in this Psalm the divinely-chosen Ruler is called both "Son of God" and the "Lord's Anointed," the Messiah. This of itself determines the original Messianic application of the designation. This passage stands in the same relation to the title "Son of God" as Dan. vii. 13 does to the correlative designation "Son of Man."

The use of "Son of God" as a synonym for Messiah in the late Jewish apocryphal books is doubted by some, while confidently affirmed by others.

3. We are now in a position to discuss the significance of the designation "Son of God" as applied in the New Testament to our Lord. Is it official, or ethical, or metaphysical? Is it nothing more than a synonym for Messiah? Or does it express in addition His pre-eminent goodness, and the singular favour and love God had towards Him? Or, back of these, does it express that which is the ground and reason both of His mission and of the good pleasure of Him who sent Him, a certain, unique, incomparable, mysterious, and eternal relationship of life and being with the Father—in a word, what we may conveniently designate a metaphysical relationship?

Now, there is no doubt, as we have already seen, that the designation "Son of God" was used by the Jews as the equivalent of Messiah. But this does not exclude its higher and unique meaning. The Jews understood our Lord to claim something far beyond the Messiahship when they charged Him with blasphemy. They on one occasion, we are told, "sought the more to kill Him because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God." And upon another occasion: "The Jews answered Him, saying, For a good work we stone Thee not, but for the blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God" (John v. 18; x. 53). At our Lord's trial before the Jewish Council His enemies were forced at last to the great issue, and it was for blasphemy and because He declared Himself to be the Son of God that He was condemned. And before Pilate, with all their pretexts and false accusations set aside, the Jews were again forced to the same issue: "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

The Jews themselves then clearly perceived the difference between their conception of the sonship of Messiah and the claims of Jesus. Their meagre idea of the Messiah will not, as Dörner says ("Doctrine of the Person of Christ," Div. I., vol. i., 53), justify us in reducing the Christian idea of the Divine sonship to the same narrow limits. It could easily be shown that the inadequacy and erroneousness of their conception of the Messiah and their rejection of Jesus were due to the externalism of their view, to its narrow and formal officialism, and their disregard of the ethical character of the sonship of Messiah. He is the Holy One of God, the sinless man, in whom the Divine law is perfectly manifested, and by whom the Divine will is completely fulfilled; and it is because of His perfect goodness that in Him God the Father is well pleased. The perfect holiness of Jesus, His absolute submission to God's will, His supreme love for the Father and for

sinners, had their great and crowning manifestation on the cross. "Therefore," He says, "doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again."

But as the ethical is the basis of the official sonship, so it in turn demands a foundation broader and deeper than humanity itself could yield. The sinlessness of Jesus is not compatible with any humanitarian theory of His being. The sinless Son of Man can be none other than the Son of God. As the official sonship rests upon the ethical, the ethical rests upon the metaphysical, without which it cannot be explained and could not exist.

But this supreme and essential sonship is not a mere inference: it rests upon the self-revelation of our Lord, upon His manifestations of Himself in His incarnate life and teachings. Let us glance at some of these.

Consider:

(1) *Christ's claim to pre-existence.* Conversing with Nicodemus, He describes Himself as the Son of Man who had come down from heaven. In the synagogue at Capernaum He calls Himself "the Bread of Life which had come down from heaven"; and He repeats this again and again in various forms. When the Jews objected that they knew His father and mother, and cavilled at His claim to have come down from heaven, He answered that they needed Divine teaching in order to receive Him, and went on to reassert His pre-existence in the same terms as before. When the disciples complained of our Lord's teaching, He appealed to His coming ascension as a corroboration of His pre-existence: "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" "The Living Father," He declares, "sent" Him. "I am from Him"; "neither came I of myself, but He sent Me." "I proceeded forth and came from God." "I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come and whither I go." It was with this marvellous consciousness of His origin and dignity that He humbled Himself to the most menial of services: "Knowing . . . that He was come from God and went to God, He . . . began to wash the disciples' feet." Wendt would interpret all these assertions in a figurative sense, and compares them with His words to His disciples: "Ye are of God," . . . "begotten of God," and such like. But, as Stevens points out, Jesus never applies to Himself this language about being begotten from God which He applies to others; and He never applies to any others the descriptions which He gives of His own coming from God. When Wendt seeks to apply his canons of interpretation to what we may regard as crucial passages, their failure is evident. Turn first to the great intercession recorded in

John xvii. : "I have glorified Thee on the earth," not in sentiment and thought merely, but in the activities of a life of perfect love and obedience; "And now," He prays, "glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." It was, as Westcott notes, glory which He had in actual possession, and not merely as the object of the Divine thought. Clearly the words express Christ's expectation of His return to a mode of existence which He had before the world was. Now, Wendt admits that the language naturally bears this meaning to us, but he describes this as a modern mode of thought which he distinguishes from the New Testament mode. He says that, according to the mode of speech and conception prevalent in the New Testament, a heavenly good, and so also a heavenly glory, can be conceived and spoken of as existing with God and belonging to a person, not because this person already exists and is invested with glory, but because the glory of God is in some way deposited and preserved for this person in heaven," just, he illustrates, as treasure was said by Jesus to be laid up for the disciples in heaven. There is no evidence that New Testament language ever confused a past participation with a promise of future blessedness. No instance can be shown of the application to disciples of such language as our Lord uses with reference to Himself. Moreover, in this passage our Lord does not speak of the existence of a glory destined for Him, but He speaks expressly of His own existence in a past condition of glory: "The glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

Let us next turn to what is, perhaps, the most conclusive assertion of our Lord's pre-existence: "Before Abraham was, I am." The Jews had reproached Jesus with claiming to be greater than Abraham. So far from disavowing the claim He maintains it, and brings it out at last in the most startling form: "Before Abraham was born, I am"—not "I was," but "I am." "I was" would have expressed simple priority; but "I am" expresses what is beyond all limitations of time. It draws the contrast between the temporal and the eternal, between the creature and the uncreated, between Abraham and Abraham's Lord. To interpret this of a mere ideal existence in the thought and counsel of God obliterates the distinction between "I am" and "I was." Besides, such an unconscious, impersonal existence could have been predicated of Abraham and of every man. The Jews, instead of taking up stones to stone Jesus might have said: "So also were we" (Reynolds). Such idealistic interpretation makes our Lord to be an empty visionary, giving needless provocation by an unintelligible jargon. Unlike the critics, the Jews took our

Lord in earnest, and, grasping the significance of His utterance, stamped it as blasphemous; and blasphemous it must be, unless it is, as we believe, the "I am," the Jehovah, of ancient Israel, Who here unveils His consciousness of Eternal Being.

(2) The *self-assertion* of Christ is one of the most startling features in the Gospel portraiture of His life and teaching. He confronts all the sorrow and weariness of the world, and points men for help and comfort not to God, but to Himself: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." "I am the Light," which shines forth into the dense darkness of sin and ignorance which broods over the world. "I am the Truth," not merely one perfectly truthful, but the very substance of truth itself; "I am the Way," the only way by which men can find God and happiness and safety; "I am the Life," not merely as having life, but as dispensing it, the only source of life, without which men must die eternally.

He claims to be the only way of access to God; no man can come to the Father, except through Him. He offers Himself as the supreme object of men's trust; men are to believe in Him as they believe in God, to honour Him as they honour God, to love Him that they may be the objects of God's love.

The mere enumeration of Christ's claims would compel us to traverse the whole extent of His utterances; for they come forth naturally, inevitably, out of His self-consciousness. He claims to do in His own name and by His own authority works which are competent to God only. He claims to control alike the forces of Nature and the powers and existences of the invisible world. He claims absolute knowledge of the human heart, and power to forgive sins. He claims that He alone knows God, and that He is the only medium of that knowledge to others. He claims absolute and binding authority and perpetuity for His own words.

In St. John's Gospel He makes five remarkable claims to equality with God—the equality of co-operative agency and co-ordinate power: "My Father worketh until now, and I work," "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise"; the equality of commensurate knowledge, "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father"; the equality of mutual in-dwelling, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me"; the equality of common possession, "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine"; the equality of essential being, "I and My Father are one," not in a mere unity of will and affection, but a unity of life and being, a substantial oneness of essence. Certainly such a unity, if not expressly asserted, is implied. The complete ethical unity of will and purpose, which is the lowest meaning

the words could bear, carries with it the underlying implication of the unity of being. Combine the Lord's assertions of eternal pre-existence with His claims to equality with God, and the demonstration is complete, that He is no created being, but the only-begotten Son, very God of Very God.

J. P. SHERATON.

(To be continued.)

ART. IV.—HOW FAR IS MODERN CRITICISM CONSISTENT WITH THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE ?¹

THE subject I am invited to discuss is, How far modern criticism is consistent with the Inspiration of the Bible; and I shall endeavour to direct my observations strictly to that question. I shall not enter upon the vast question of the results, or alleged results, of that criticism, as it would lead us into far too wide a field for the present occasion. It is the more important, moreover, to keep strictly to this issue because it is greatly obscured in much of the current discussion on the subject. Take, for example, a book now widely read, Professor Adam Smith's recent volume, entitled "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament," to which it will be convenient frequently to refer in this paper, and you will find that the question of Inspiration is practically put out of sight, under the discussion of the very different question whether the Bible furnishes a record of God's revelation of Himself to the people of Israel. The question the Professor asks (p. 73) is, "What does criticism leave to us in the Old Testament; how much true history: and how much Divine revelation?" Roughly speaking, his answer is (p. 77) that "with the time of Samuel we at last enter real and indubitable history." Not that even after that date all the history is to be trusted. He says that the books of Samuel and Kings "are composed of narratives of very various worth. Some are plainly of an age long subsequent to the events they describe; there has been time for later conceptions to mingle with the facts on which they are based." But on the basis of the limited historical materials thus left to us he confidently maintains (p. 142) that "there are here the lines of an apologetic for a Divine revelation through early Israel, more sure and more clear than any which the traditional interpretation of the Old Testament ever attempted to

¹ A paper read before the Eastern Counties Clerical Conference at Ipswich on June 4, 1902.