

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ST. PAUL

IN THE SUPERScription OF HIS EPISTLE TO THE  
ROMANS.—NO. 2.

VERSES 3 and 4.—*Περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.*

*Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*—KING JAMES'S VERSION.

*Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who, while descended from the lineage of David in respect to the flesh, was, in virtue of the resurrection of the dead, determined to be God's Son in power, in respect to the spirit of holiness.*—THE WRITER'S REVISED VERSION.

These verses have been the battle-field of many exegetical and theological conflicts, and have given occasion to a large amount of special polemical literature. Servetus, in his day, said that they "had never been understood."<sup>1</sup> Professor Jowett, in our day, regards them as among "the most difficult in the Epistles of St. Paul. We cannot," he says, "express their meaning adequately, we can only approach it."<sup>2</sup> We do not purpose to concern ourselves, polemically, with the contests that have been agitated. Neither shall we pretend to grasp or comprehend the grand realities of superhuman being that are referred to in the Apostle's

<sup>1</sup> "Locus nunquam intellectus."—*De Trinitatis Erroribus*, fol. 54.

<sup>2</sup> "Epistles of St. Paul," vol. i. p. 44.

statements. It is not, strictly speaking, these grand objective realities with which, *as expositors*, we have to do. It is, on the contrary, the Apostle's subjective conceptions of the realities, in so far as these conceptions are revealed to us in the verbal representations that lie before us. It is no great presumption to cherish the hope that those verbal representations—when calmly and candidly interrogated round and round—will, to the congenial spirit, yield the fulness of their import. Such a hope does no more than assume that the Apostle was able to render his representations luminous. Even after they have been mastered, however, we may be very far, not only from fully comprehending the great Christological realities referred to, but likewise from penetrating all the strata of evangelical thought that lay wide and deep within the abysses of the Apostle's mind. He has not revealed to us all his ideas. They do not all crop up to view. But some of them do.

We proceed then to consider the detailed contents of the two verses before us. The gospel, says the Apostle in the preceding verse, *was promised in former times by God*. He adds, in Verse 3, *concerning his Son*. Many editors of the text have regarded the pronoun here employed as of intenser import—“*his own Son*.” So Robert Stephens in his 1550 and 1551 editions, though not in those of 1546 and 1549. The Elzevirs likewise, and Mills, Wettstein, Griesbach, as also Courcelles, Leusden, Schöttgen, Tittmann, Knapp, Vater, Hahn, Muralt. But Bengel, Matthaei, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, following in the footsteps of Erasmus and Henry Stephens, have done well in replacing the emphatic with the unemphatic pronoun

—a mere matter of softer breathing in the Greek original.

The particular "Son of God" referred to is specified in the words standing in apposition, *Jesus Christ our Lord*. It was He who was promised in the Old Testament pre-announcement of the gospel.

It is not Jesus Christ alone, however, who receives the designation *son of God*. Adam, we are informed, was God's *son*.<sup>1</sup> All men are *God's offspring*.<sup>2</sup> Israel was, in an emphatic sense, *God's son*.<sup>3</sup> Believers of the gospel are also emphatically his *sons and daughters*.<sup>4</sup> Angels too are called *the sons of God*.<sup>5</sup> There are other applications besides of the phrase. But there is a kind of superlative emphasis in the way in which the designation, *the Son of God*, is given to Jesus Christ. He "hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than angels. For unto which of the angels said God at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* And again, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.*"<sup>6</sup> Moses was "faithful in all his house, *as a servant*, but Christ *as a Son over his own house.*"<sup>7</sup> Christ was God's "own Son."<sup>8</sup> He was his "only begotten Son."<sup>9</sup> He was a Son in such a sense that he could say, without presumption, "I and my Father are one."<sup>10</sup> He could say, without undue assumption, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."<sup>11</sup> He had no other father than God;<sup>12</sup> and, although when speaking of God to others He could say of Him, "My Father and your Father,"<sup>13</sup> never-

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. iv. 22.

<sup>4</sup> John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14-17; 1 John iii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Job i. 6; ii. 1; xxxvii. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. i. 4, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Heb. iii. 5, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. viii. 32.

<sup>9</sup> John iii. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. x. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. xiv. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Luke i. 34, 35.

<sup>13</sup> John xx. 17.

theless God was more emphatically his Father than He is "our Father," or the Father of any other beings.

Some have supposed that the designation, *God's Son*, as applied to Christ in the passage before us, is a term of office, and is equivalent to the phrase, *the Anointed One*, or the expression, *the King of Israel*, or the appellation, *the Christ*. This is the opinion of Grotius, Köllner, Winzer, Stuart; but it is quite unnatural. It is true, indeed, that it is the same high Personage who is at once *the Christ, the King of Israel, and the Son of God*. But to suppose that his *Sonship* is his *Kingship* or his *Messiahship*, is to confound things that essentially differ, and to lose sight at once of the true idea of sonship, and of the inseparable correlation of the idea to that of fatherhood. In the inter-relativity of fatherhood and sonship, community of nature is implied. And when nothing of the morally unnatural attaches, either, on the one hand, to the father, or, on the other, to the son, it is further implied that there will be, on the part of the father toward the son, a peculiarity of affection and favour. Of the three ideas, (1) community of nature, (2) intensity of affection, and (3) peculiarity of favour, sometimes one and sometimes another may stand out prominently to view. Sometimes all three may be blended into unity; and sometimes, when thus blended, they may be applied either in a higher and sublimer, or in a lower and more analogical, acceptation. But wherever there is fatherhood and sonship, and no moral violation of nature, there will be, in a lower or loftier plane of real objectivity, community of nature, intensity of affection, and peculiarity of favour. It was thus that Adam was *the*

*son of God.* He was not merely created by God. He derived from God a nature which, in its moral element, was akin to that of God Himself. He was made in God's image ; and, as such, he was the object of peculiar affection and favour. All mankind are, in a similar sense, *God's offspring*, his *sons* and *daughters*. Israel of old, as a part of mankind, were emphatically *his son*. They were *his national son*. Over and above the possession of a moral nature akin to that of God, and over and above their enjoyment of the peculiar affection which went forth, and still goes forth, from the Divine heart toward all human creatures, they were the objects of *peculiar Divine favour*. Hence the distinguishing element of their national sonship. Believers of the gospel are more emphatically still *God's sons* and *daughters*. They are "partakers of the divine nature,"<sup>1</sup> not only in its moral 'potentiality,' but in its moral 'actuality;' and that increasingly. And hence, again, they become increasingly the objects of very peculiar Divine affection and favour. In a somewhat similar sense are holy angels *the sons of God*. But the designation, *the Son of God*, when applied to Jesus Christ, bears a meaning that is far nearer the centre of the absolute ideal of sonship. It is indeed at the very centre. Jesus Christ is, with superlative emphasis, *the Son of God*, because there is absolute identity of nature between Him and the Father, and that not only morally, but likewise 'physically' or 'metaphysically;' while He is, at the same time, the object of an infinite fulness of paternal affection, and is divinely exalted, in the enjoyment of favour and honour and glory, far above all created principalities and powers on earth

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter i. 4.

and in heaven. It was some such conception, apparently, of the sonship of Jesus Christ, that was in the mind of the Apostle when he said that the gospel, of which he was the herald, was, in its pre-announcement by God through his prophets, in sacred Old Testament writings, a promise *concerning his Son*.

In King James's English Version, and in our Revised Rendering, the words *Jesus Christ our Lord* are introduced immediately after the expression *his Son*; but as in the original they stand at the conclusion of the fourth verse, we shall postpone the consideration of them till we have discussed the intermediate clauses.

The Apostle, immediately on giving the designation of the illustrious Being who, in the complexity of his glorious personality, is the subject-matter of the gospel, seems to have thought that it would be well to distinguish and explain. He who was the personal subject-matter of the gospel was indeed *God's Son*. That was *his pre-eminent filial relationship*. But there was complexity in his relation of filiation; and a complexity which, even in its humbler element, linked Him on to what was honourable and august. Hence the succeeding words, *who was descended from the lineage of David, in respect to the flesh*. Even in the humbler element of his complex being He was of royal descent. And his royal pedigree was the most illustrious. He was of "the house of David." In the specification of this relationship, the Apostle might intend both to anticipate an objection to his representation of our Lord's sonship, and to augment his readers' idea of the dignity of the Being whose person and work form the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel.

The phrase, *who descended*, is a free translation of the original expression; but, though free, it is correct, and is certainly to be preferred to the translation of the Latin Vulgate, *who was made to him*,<sup>1</sup> which not only interjects, apocryphally and incongruously, the pronoun *to him*, that is *to God*, but also strains and somewhat distorts the natural import of the verb. As Beza, however, retained the Vulgate verb *was made*, the same somewhat distorted translation descended, through the English Geneva, to King James's Version. Laurentius Valla substituted *was born to him*,<sup>2</sup> for *was made to him*; and Erasmus admitted, so far as the verb is concerned, the same translation into his Version. It was adopted by Luther, and after Luther retained by Piscator, and after Piscator by Bengel, in their respective German Versions. Many of the more modern translators and expositors, inclusive of Meyer, Van Hengel, Krehl, Rilliet, retain the Version of Valla, though of course excluding the apocryphal pronoun. St. Augustine informs us that even in his day *born*<sup>3</sup> was found in some of the Latin codices instead of *made*. It is certainly an allowable translation, though free, and too modal in its freedom, as much so as the Version of Tyndale, "the which was *begotten* of the seed of David." Other translators, again, in avoiding this extreme of modality, have landed in the opposite extreme, by using the simple substantive verb, "who *was* of the lineage," or, "of the race of David." Ewald's translation is better, "who *came* out of David's seed."<sup>4</sup> Michaelis's is better still, "who *descended* from David."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Qui factus est ei."

<sup>2</sup> "Qui genitus est ei."

<sup>3</sup> "Natus."

<sup>4</sup> "Der aus Davids Samen kam."

<sup>5</sup> "Der von David abstammt."

The variety of Versions is remarkable, and all of them are free. But we are shut up, at once in Latin, English, German, Dutch, French, Italian, to use some freedom or other in reproducing the Apostle's idea. His idea is literally, "who *became*<sup>1</sup> of the seed of David," an excellent idiom in Greek, but entirely unidiomatic in such a language as our own. The word, unlike the substantive verb *was*, expresses origination; and, unlike *born* and *begotten*, it does not express a particular mode of origination. The idea certainly is that our Lord *genealogically sprang* from the lineage of David. He was, as Grynæus expresses it in his Version, *a descendant of David*.

The expression, *David's seed*, as used by the Apostle, has in it a peculiar tinge of Hebraism. The Hebrews, though by no means monopolizing—in contradistinction to the Greeks for instance—the word *seed* in the sense of *progeny*, yet used it so habitually in its genealogical acceptation, that their custom stereotyped itself into a national idiom. In the application of this idiom, the *legally* genealogical element predominated over the purely *physical*. And hence, even although in connection with the passage before us it could be proved—as it never can be—that Mary, our Lord's virgin-mother, was not herself of the lineage of David, it would still be the case that, in true genealogical phraseology, our Lord *sprang from David's seed*. He was legally, in virtue of Mary's betrothal to Joseph, the descendant of David. Joseph's legal relationship passed over in its effects to Mary. And thus it is that in the genealogies of both St. Matthew and St. Luke the pedigree of our Lord is given *through Joseph*. Augustine thought

<sup>1</sup> τοῦ γενουένου.



that the expression before us was evidence of Mary's consanguinity to David; but he admitted and contended, nevertheless, that even although it could be proved that there was no such consanguinity, the legal genealogy through Joseph would amply suffice for the validity of the affirmation that our Lord was David's son.<sup>1</sup>

The additional expression, *with respect to the flesh*, is, in the original,<sup>2</sup> anarthrous, *with respect to flesh*. Such a translation might be tolerated were it not for the antithetic expression in the following verse, *with respect to the spirit of holiness*,<sup>3</sup> which could on no account bear to be represented thus, *with respect to spirit of holiness*. In our English idiom we require to supply, as regards this second member of the antithesis, either the article or the possessive pronoun. We must say, either, *with respect to 'the' spirit of holiness*, or, *with respect to 'his' spirit of holiness*. And thus, on the assumption that a real antithesis is intended, we must, to preserve concinnity, render the expression before us, either, *with respect to 'the' flesh*, or, *with respect to 'his' flesh*. So far from perfect coincidence is the usage of the two languages in reference to the article.

Rückert, indeed, supposes that there is peculiar significance in the anarthrous condition of the expression. He thinks that the absence of the article is a proof that the Apostle does not mean *in respect to his flesh*, but merely intended to qualify, in an adverbial manner, the preceding participle, so that the mode of the genealogical event referred to might be expressed. The

<sup>1</sup> *Consensus Evangelistarum*, lib. ii. c. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Κατὰ σάρκα.

<sup>3</sup> κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.

Apostle's entire expression would thus, according to Pückert, be equivalent to this, *who was descended, in a fleshly way, of the seed of David*. The one great but insuperable objection to this interpretation arises from the antithesis of the phrase to the correlative phrase in the fourth verse. This correlative phrase cannot be understood as adverbially qualifying the participle *determined*. It points to some higher element in the complex being of our Lord. And hence we seem to be shut up to regard the antithetic expression of the third verse as pointing to the lower element of his complex being—*in respect to his flesh*. The article is legitimately dispensed with, just because the nature of the case, as spreading out into view in the amplitude of the entire paragraph, rendered the Apostle's reference sufficiently definite when made the object of his own subjective reflection.

The range of reference that is to be attributed to the word *flesh* has been matter of dispute. Paulus confines it strictly to the material element<sup>1</sup> of our Lord's humanity. So did Taylor long before him, and John Locke before Taylor, and Crell before John Locke. So does Köllner, and so, very expressly, do Schrader, Oltramare, and Mehring. But the great majority of expositors, following in the footsteps of the Fathers, suppose that the expression is intended to cover the entire area of our Lord's human nature. The translation of the phrase might therefore be, *with respect to his human nature*, or *with respect to his humanity*. Beza well represents the general opinion of expositors when he explains the expression as meaning, *in so far as he was a man*.<sup>2</sup> Both opinions are so far right, when they

<sup>1</sup> The *Körperlichkeit*.

<sup>2</sup> "Quatenus homo est."

are respectively stripped of their polemical antagonism to each other. There can be no doubt that *flesh* just means *flesh*. There can likewise be no doubt that, in the New Testament usage of the term, it has, in at least a considerable number of instances, an exclusive reference to what is material and corporeal. And there can also be no doubt that, so far as Christ's genealogical descent from David was concerned, it was really the corporeal element that was derived. All this is unquestionable. But then, on the other hand, there can be just as little doubt that, in common Hebrew usage, when the term *flesh* was applied to man, there was very often *subtending the word* a reference more or less distinct to the full complement of human nature. Hence the frequently recurring expression, *all flesh*, as meaning *all men*: "Unto thee shall *all flesh* come;" "Let *all flesh* bless his holy name," &c. When something was denied of *all flesh*, its presence was affirmed of *nobody*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, our English idiomatic expression, *every 'body*, corresponds almost to a nicety to the Hebrew idiomatic expression, *all 'flesh*;" and in that Saxon phrase the *body* is evidently to be understood as having, *subtending it*, a reference to the full complement of human nature. Such, we doubt not, is the range of the reference of the word *flesh* when it is said of our Lord, "the Word was made *flesh*," that is, *the Word became incarnate, and thus human—the Word became man*. Such too is the complementive range of the Apostle's kindred but more complex expression, "I conferred not with *flesh and blood*."<sup>2</sup> His meaning is, *I conferred not with human beings, I conferred not with men*. And when he elsewhere speaks to Christian ser-

<sup>1</sup> See Rom. ii. 20; 1 Cor. i. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 16.

vants in reference to their "masters *according to the flesh*," he refers not exclusively to the merely corporeal element in the complex being of their terrestrial masters. He refers to their *human masters*, as distinguished from their Divine Lord.

While the word *flesh*, then, in the passage before us, does denote *flesh*, and was obviously intended to have the point or angle of its reference turned distinctly toward the corporeal element of our Lord's human nature, there is no need for supposing that that angle was intended to hide from view the complement of his humanity. We may, on the contrary, with perfect propriety suppose that, in virtue of the Hebrew idiom, a further reach of reference was recognized as subtending its angular point. Physiologically speaking, there must have been something present to the Apostle's view beyond mere flesh. The term cannot reasonably be regarded as excluding all that was not really flesh—blood for instance, and bones and skin. And if there must be thus subtending it a reference to other physiological elements of human nature, besides its own physiological self, we cannot see that there can be any great objection, so far as the word itself is concerned, to the entertainment of the supposition that the subtended reference, after the license of the common Hebrew idiom, spreads itself out indefinitely, and in dimness of discrimination, till it embraces the entire complement of human nature. It would be wrong, indeed, to suppose that to the Apostle's mind the natural corporeal point of the word's import became shaded off. It would be also wrong to suppose that he had present to his consciousness the precise distinctions which are conventional in our analytic philosophy of

humanity. It would be still further wrong to suppose that if he had our distinctions present in his consciousness, he meant to give his *imprimatur* to the idea that the human soul and spirit are propagated from individual to individual in a traducian manner. But it is as certainly right to presume that the Apostle handled his language in the free and easy way that all educated persons, when really at their ease, approve of and practise. He affected not to be a precisian in his phrases. Realizing as he did that on the nether side of Christ's complex nature He was really human, while on the upper side He was as really Divine, nothing is more reasonable than that, in speaking of our Lord's inferior relationship, and of that relationship genealogically viewed, he should seize upon the undermost and outermost of its elements, not only without intending to shut out from the perspective the other and interior elements that are complementive of human nature, but with the express intention of having them taken into view, as naturally subtending the element that is specified. "What are you doing, O Paul?" says Chrysostom: "first lifting our minds aloft towards the great things of the gospel, and then bringing us down to David? Tell me, Are you speaking of some mere man?" "He that would lead us to heaven," he replies, "must lead us up from below: for so was the actual Divine arrangement (respecting our Lord). People first of all saw Him a man upon earth, and then they discovered that He was God."<sup>1</sup> Even in recognizing Him as a man, the order of their perceptions was in the ascending mood. They first of all saw what was but *flesh and blood*, and thence they as-

<sup>1</sup> Πρῶτον γοῦν εἶδον αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπὶ γῆς, καὶ τότε ἐνόησαν Θεόν.

cended to the recognition of soul and mind. There is thus beautiful propriety in the Apostle's phraseology. He takes hold of human nature by its sensuous and most conspicuous element. And when we bear in mind that he was speaking of a genealogical derivation, we see that there is more than propriety, there is the strictest accuracy. For not only was there the complexity of the human and the Divine in the unity of our Lord's peculiar personality, there was "wheel within wheel." In his human nature there was a complexity of sub-natures. There was both soul and body.<sup>1</sup> And therefore, when mention is made of his descent from the stock of David, there is something finely discriminative, and discriminatively accurate, in having the reference limited, so far as concerns *the externality of phraseology*, as distinguished from *the inwardly subtending perspective of idea*, to that constituent of the being which is capable of derivation from generation to generation. J. MORISON.

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### A BIBLICAL NOTE.

#### GALATIANS I. 19.

MOST recent commentators on the Epistle to the Galatians have now arrived at the conclusion that the "James" here described as "the Lord's brother" could not have been one of the original Twelve Apostles. The reasons for this conclusion have been ably and convincingly stated by Bishop Lightfoot in his Commentary on this Epistle.<sup>2</sup> The same commentators,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii. 10; Matt. xxvi. 38.

<sup>2</sup> See his "Dissertation on the Brethren of the Lord," and the detached note "On the Name and Office of an Apostle."