

THE NAME OF NAMES.

A CRITICISM.

ALL that Dr. Watson puts to paper is written with such gracefulness as well as force as may like enough disarm criticism. Perhaps, however, room may be found in the *EXPOSITOR* for a friendly protest by one of his admirers against some of the statements and conclusions made and drawn in his article of February last on the "Name of Names."

An examination of this paper shows the emphasis laid by the writer on four main points.

(i.) The view stated that there is now a current feeling against the free and frank employment of the personal name of our Lord in any address to Him.

(ii.) Secondly, that those who share this feeling against "the unguarded use" of the name Jesus assume, at least in certain quarters of religious thought, "that the person who calls the Master Jesus too constantly may fairly be suspected of false doctrine."

(iii.) Thirdly, that the phraseology of the Gospel narrative offers a vindication and a plea "for this birthright of the Christian," viz., the use of the name Jesus "with perfect freedom."

(iv.) That the protection and "adornment" of the Name of Names by other titles in the Pauline Epistles, is (so I understand Dr. Watson) an unsafe guide for Christians only because the Apostle found the "unadorned Name" not pronounced enough for arguments and creeds, for Apologetic and Dogmatic.

We deal with these issues in their order.

I am at one with Dr. Watson in his observation of a habit of reserve in regard to the use of the name Jesus. It is widespread, in this and that instance it may enwrap an

individual Christian too closely. So much may frankly be conceded. Dr. Watson wholly condemns and deplors this reserve. Has he however truly traced its cause and origin? He appears to think that those to whom this habit is second nature are for ever on the look out for the modern Arian, and anxious to enter into the lists with those who as venturing to speak of the Lord as Jesus "derogate from His divine honour." There is no need for controversy here—it has no place. To adopt or to refrain from a custom in an issue which is not so vital as Dr. Watson's eloquent words might lead readers to suppose, implies no violent antagonism with others whose use is different. But those to whom the habit of reserve appears comely as well as reasonable are entitled, and may be expected to show to what they owe it. It is simply to a feeling of reverence. One does not declare that a great deal of Roman Catholic devotional literature, or many of our hymns, have necessarily an Arian tendency, because a sober-minded judgment will often find in the passionate repetition of the single name Jesus a hindrance rather than a help to the worship. It is indeed noteworthy that this frequent and fervent address to our Lord as Jesus attaches itself, as a characteristic note, to those who differ widely on certain features of the Christian faith. It is at once mediæval and intensely modern. As the monk flings himself at the foot of his crucifix, this is the only name by which he will address God in prayer. As the Salvation Army "Captain" pours forth his ecstatic utterances, one might listen in vain for any idea of the Fatherhood of God, while allusions to the person and office of the Holy Spirit would certainly be faint and precarious. This constant use of the Name of Names has thus the danger besetting it not only of a possible irreverence, but also of a probable disturbance of the balance of the Christian faith. The tendency of much of the preaching of to-day, reflected as it is in extempore

prayers and many of our most popular hymns, would lead many a worshipper to the conclusion that Christian people could dispense with any reference to the First and Third Persons of the Trinity. This may for the moment seem to make the teaching of Christianity easier to embrace, but at what a cost of the proportion and fulness of its truths!

If however the issue were merely a matter of sentiment, its discussion would be hardly suitable in the pages of the EXPOSITOR. But the invitation to follow the record of the Gospel narrative in order to discover which of the two is the better way in which we may use the "Name of Names" is a welcome one to students of the New Testament. Shall we be nearer the example of Evangelist and Apostle by freest use of the name Jesus, or by a somewhat guarded use of the single Name, preferring others which mark His sovereignty, His Messianic dignity, His Divine sonship, His act of redemption, or adding these titles to the solitary personal name? This opens up an enquiry as interesting as it is suggestive. The point, be it remembered, is not how our Lord is spoken of by the narrators of His earthly life, nor how He calls Himself, but how His disciples should speak of Him and address Him. There is no doubt that the Evangelists do exhibit a preference for the "simple and unadorned" Name. There is also no manner of doubt that the Apostolic writers show an equally marked preference for adding titles to the simple name; the unadorned Name with them "passes into a more stately form." Thus Jesus is joined with Lord twenty-two times in the usage of these writers; with Lord and Christ thirty-three times; with Christ fifty times. Again as alternative titles Christ is used singly ninety-seven times; Son of God, fifteen times; Lord, eight times; Saviour, nineteen times. The difference of usage is a remarkable one between the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. Dr. Watson accounts for the change by saying that the Gospels repre-

sent "the feeling of the first period, of faith without controversy, of religion before theology."

Is not the difference much more simply accounted for by a close observance of the capital literary distinctions between the Gospels and the rest of the canon of the New Testament? The former are biographical in subject; the latter, with the exceptions of the Acts and the Apocalypse, epistolary in character and purpose. The standpoint of the writers sufficiently explains the striking variance in the employment of the Name of Names. In the early material out of which the Gospels were constructed, whether such material were oral or written, the solitary name Jesus would be used. The simplicity of the facts stated answers to the simplicity of the personal title. But as soon as ever Apostolic writers speak or preach or pray or plead in the Name of Jesus then it appears (with exceptions so rare as almost to be ignored) together with such titles as a deep reverence would suggest, or an alternative title is used that all might know the majesty of Him whose bond-servants they were. This change of use was clearly deliberate and advised. If the matter stood merely thus that the Evangelists use the single Name while St. Paul adopts more stately forms, then something might be said for the inference that the former "was not pronounced enough for arguments and creeds, for Apologetic and Dogmatic." The issue does not however rest on such a comparison alone. It is now generally conceded that St. Luke is the author of the Acts of the Apostles; it is certain that the writer of the Fourth Gospel also indited the three letters which bear his name. It is very interesting to observe that as the standpoint and attitude of each of these two vary, so does their employment of the Name of Names. Writing as Evangelists, as biographers, they mainly, though not exclusively, use the historic personal Jesus. But when St. Luke appears as the historian of the origins of the Church, as

the honest chronicler of the apology of the Protomartyr, of the speeches of St. Peter and St. Paul, then the change, with rarest exception,¹ is made into fuller or alternative titles.

St. John's writings provide us with still more convincing evidence upon the point. A distance in time of not more than ten years may separate the composition of the Fourth Gospel and the first of his three Epistles. As a narrator of the words and life of His Master he employs with a remarkable uniformity the single Name. In his three letters, when he is making impassioned pleas for Light and Life, for Truth and Love, the name Jesus never stands alone.² In a word, when New Testament writers are simple narrators, they normally use the name Jesus; when they preach or teach, when they are engaged in actions of intercession, of prayer, of praise, when they plead His cause before friend or foe, with a Church or individual, they have precisely that reserve and hesitancy about its single employment which characterise thousands of the not least devout of the Master's disciples to-day.

The employment of the personal name in a biographical narrative appears natural, inevitable. It is however highly pertinent to observe that in the Gospels our Lord is never once addressed by the single name Jesus. The feeling of reverence which prompted His own to forbear to address Him so, appears to have been shared in a measure by His foes. Even they, it seems, could not make so free with Him. We know how His disciples spoke of Him, and to Him, not merely by a collection and comparison of the converse between themselves and Him, or with themselves about Him, but from His own immediate and direct indication as to their general usage.

Ἰμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με Ὁ διδάσκαλος, καὶ Ὁ κύριος, καὶ καλῶς

¹ One occurs in Acts i. 11, but the words are those of angelic beings.

² 1 St. John iv. 15 is not really an exception.

λέγετε, εἰμὶ γάρ.¹ He notes with commendation the honour which they paid to Him, and at once draws a lesson of their duty therefrom. Of the titles here quoted the former marks sometimes a free, at others a partial, concession of our Lord's position and authority as a Teacher. He was, at least to those who appealed to Him, a Rabbi.² Hence this title, which is found about fifty times in the Gospels, occurs chiefly in passages where our Lord's teaching function is in question, or appealed to. If He were to be addressed in respectful terms, this one of Teacher would be natural and would not greatly compromise the secret foes who used it. It is not so, however, with the title Lord, for although, as in some of the parables, it is applied to men, it is one of unquestioned dignity, it would be a compromising title; hence though it is found some two hundred times in the Gospel narrative it rarely passes the lips of a foe. It is the usual mode of address by the inner circle of Christ's own followers, it passes the lips of all those who felt themselves open to the hospital of His divine pity. This is the way in which in His absence the Apostolic college refers to its Head. They love thus to admit His supremacy, to acknowledge His ownership. Of other modes of address which respect or reverence to Him suggested, two may be briefly referred to. Son of David is found eleven times in the Synoptic Gospels, and Master³ six times, but only in the Gospel according to St. Luke. The detection, therefore, of what Dr. Watson describes as "a vague dislike" to the use of the name of Jesus in referring to Him, or in speaking to Him, is a very simple matter when recourse is had to the evangelical record. It is there not indeed vague, but strongly in evidence. The very aspect and bearing, the

¹ St. John xiii. 13.

² St. John i. 38; cf. xx. 16.

³ The confusion in the A.V. between the titles *Κυρίος* and *Ἐπιστάτης* is regrettable.

look and the speech of Him who was and is Vere Deus forbade the employment to Him or in regard to Him of the single Name.

This rough survey of the evidence of the New Testament would seem therefore to lead to a conclusion quite opposite to that which Dr. Watson's eloquence suggests.

In the present day may be read with pleasure and profit not a few Lives of Christ. Writers of such lives will be seen to follow unconsciously the practice of the Evangelists in speaking of our Lord as Jesus, as they follow the passage of His blessed feet in the Holy Land. But it may be held for certain that such writers, if heard in the pulpit, or overheard in the intimacies of Christian friendship, would as unconsciously adorn and protect the single Name with other titles. The Name which was so called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb,¹ the Name which is above every other, must needs have a dignity so awful about it, that its less familiar employment is no unreasonable result. If here and there a passionate discipleship to Christ claims and exercises a complete liberty in the matter, such freedom to speak so is not to be denied. It is always perilous to discourage enthusiasm whether it is exhibited in word or in deed, yet those who use the Name of Names with a lowly caution and tender reserve are not far from the example of those who were His nearest and dearest in His earthly life,—of those who first published abroad His Gospel, and lived, strove, and died for His Name's sake.

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¹ S. Luke ii. 21.