ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

X. ADOPTION.

THE idea of Adoption, *υἱοθεσία*,[1] can hardly be said to occupy, in the Pauline system of thought, a place of importance co-ordinate with that of justification. It denotes rather a phase in the *Blessedness of the Justified*, than an independent benefit of God's grace. It were, however, a mistake on this account to overlook the idea in an exposition of St. Paul's conception of Christianity. The "adoption of sons" conferred on believers demands prominent recognition were it only because of its connection with the justified man's felicity. For that topic, with all that belonged to it, bulked largely in the mind of the apostle. He descants thereon with evident delight in various places in his epistles, especially in *Romans* v. 1–11, where he describes the justified state as one of triumphant joy, invincible buoyancy, and hopefulness; of joy in an anticipated future glory, in a present full of tribulation but fruitful in spiritual discipline through that very tribulation, in God Himself the *summum bonum*. One cannot but note here how radically optimistic the apostle is; how truly joy is for him the keynote of the Christian life. "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer"—so he pithily defines the Christian temper in the hortatory part of his Epistle to the Romans,[2] and with this definition the whole strain of his religious teaching is in sympathy. And it is well on so important a matter to point out that St. Paul is here not only consistent with himself, but, what is of even greater moment, in thorough accord with the doctrine of Jesus, as when in a memorable utterance He likened the disciple-circle to a

[1] *Gal.* iv. 4; *Rom.* viii. 15.

[2] *Rom.* xii. 12; with which compare 1 *Thess.* v. 16, 17.

bridal party.[1] The harmony between apostle and Master in this respect points to and rests on a deeper harmony, an essential agreement in their respective conceptions of the relations between God and man.

St. Paul's letters being occasional and fragmentary, brief rapid utterances on urgent topics not necessarily or even probably revealing the full-orbed circle of his religious thought, it need not surprise us that we find nowhere in them a formal doctrine concerning God and man and their mutual relations. We can only expect hints, words which imply more than they say. Such a word is *υἱοθεσία*. It has for its presupposition Christ's characteristic conception of God as Father, and of men as His sons. Familiarity with Christ's doctrine of the Fatherhood, and more or less complete insight into and sympathy with its import, is to be presumed in all New Testament writers who all use the new name for God which Jesus made current. The insight and sympathy need not be conceived of as complete; it is no reproach to the apostles to think it possible that in their insight into the spiritual essence of God they came behind the only-begotten Son.[2] That St. Paul did so this very word *υἱοθεσία* may seem to prove. In Christ's doctrine God is always a Father, a Father even to the unthankful and evil, even to unfilial prodigals. In the apostle's doctrine, as commonly understood, God becomes Father by an act of adoption graciously exercised towards persons previously occupying a lower position than that of sons.

The difference is real, and it must be confessed that sonship in St. Paul's way of putting it appears an external and artificial thing compared to the aspect it assumes in the genial presentation of Jesus. Yet the divergence must not be exaggerated. For whatever may be said as to the

[1] *Matt.* ix. 15.

[2] *Vide* Dr. Fairbairn in *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 293, on this point.

form under which he conceives it, there can be no question that for the apostle the filial standing of a believer is a very real and precious thing. It is as real as if it were based on nature and not on an arbitrary act of adoption. And it is by no means self-evident that the apostle thought of men as, antecedent to that act, in no sense sons of God. For we must note the connection in which he introduces the idea. In both the texts the state of adoption stands in antithesis to the state of legalism. The privilege consists in one being made a son who was formerly a slave. "Wherefore thou art no more a slave (δοῦλος) but a son."[1] But the two states are not absolutely exclusive. The slave might be a son who had not yet attained to his rights. So St. Paul actually conceived the matter when he wrote the epistle in which the idea of adoption is first broached. Those who through the mission of Christ attain to the position of sons had been sons all along, only differing nothing from slaves because of their subjection to legalism.[2] The apostle had in view chiefly the religious condition of Israel under law and gospel—God's son from the first,[3] but subjected to legal ordinances, till Christ came and brought in the era of grace. But may not his thought be generalised so as to embrace the whole of mankind? Are not all men God's sons reduced to a state of slavery under sin, and waiting consciously or unconsciously for the hour of their emancipation out of servitude into sonship by the grace of their Heavenly Father?

It is only when we view the Pauline idea of adoption in connection with the antithesis between sonship and servitude that we can properly appreciate either its theological import or its religious value. Looked at apart therefrom, as an abstract theological term, the word may very readily

[1] *Gal.* iv. 7. In *Romans* viii. 15, the spirit of sonship is opposed to the spirit of bondage (δουλείας).

[2] *Gal.* iv. 1: οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου.

[3] *Rom.* ix. 4: "Israelites whose is the adoption" (υἱοθεσία).

foster inadequate conceptions of the Christian's privilege of sonship, and even give a legal aspect to his whole relation to God. It cannot be denied that to a certain extent such results have actually followed the permanent use in theology of an expression which, as originally employed, was charged with a strong antilegal bias. St. Paul's authority has gained currency in theology for a word which, as understood by theologians, has proved in no small measure antagonistic to his religious spirit. The fact raises the question whether it would not be wise to allow the category of "adoption" to fall into desuetude, and to express the truth about the relation of man to God in terms drawn from our Lord's own teaching. Words used with a controversial reference do not easily retain their original connotation when the conflict to which they owe their origin has passed away. The primary antithesis is lost sight of and new antitheses take its place. So in the case of *υἱοθεσία*. In the apostle's mind the antithesis was between a son *indeed*, and a son who is nothing better than a servant; in the mind of the systematic theologian it becomes sonship *of a sort* versus creaturehood, or subjecthood, the original relation of man to God as Creator and Sovereign. We are in a wholly different world of thought, while using the same phrases.

Adoption, in St. Paul's view, is, not less than justification, an objective transaction. It denotes the entrance into a new relation, being constituted sons. Adoption as a divine act must be distinguished from the *spirit* of adoption which is the subjective state of mind answering to the objective relation. The two things are not only distinguishable but separable. All who are justified, all who believe in Jesus, however weak their faith, are in the Pauline sense sons of God, have received the adoption. But not all who believe in Christ have the spirit of sonship. On the contrary, the fewest have it, the fewest realise their

privilege and live up to it; the greater number of Christians are more or less under the influence of a legal, fear-stricken spirit, which prevents them from regarding God as indeed their Father. The spirit of sonship is therefore not identical with sonship; it is rather one of the benefits to which sonship gives right, and which in a normal healthy state of the Christian life follow in its train.

The really important contribution made by St. Paul to the doctrine of God's Fatherhood or man's sonship does not lie in his formal idea of adoption, but in the emphasis with which he insists on the filial spirit as that which becomes the believer in Jesus. In this whole matter of sonship we have to do not with theological metaphysics but with vital, ethical and religious interests. What do we mean when we tell men they are sons of God? Not to flatter them or amuse them with idle phrases, or to teach them a Pantheistic doctrine of the essential identity of the human and the divine. We mean to awaken in them an exacting sense of obligation, and a blessed sense of privilege. That was what Christ meant when He said to publicans and sinners, as He did in effect: Ye are God's sons: "Because ye are sons ye may not live as ye have been living. God's sons must be Godlike. Because ye are sons ye may cherish high hopes in spite of your degradation. If ye return in penitence to your Father's house, He will receive you with open arms as if ye had never done wrong; nay, with a warmer welcome because ye are erring children returned." St. Paul deprived himself of the opportunity of enforcing the doctrine of sonship on the side of duty by failing to use the relation as one applicable to men in general; though this cannot be said without qualification if we accept the discourse on Mars Hill as indicating the gist of what he said to the men of Athens. "Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or

stone, graven by art and man's device."[1] That is, It does not become God's sons to be grovelling idolaters; an excellent example of the *noblesse oblige* argument. But whatever historic value may be assigned to the Mar's Hill incident, it is certain at least that St. Paul did most vigorously enforce the filial dignity and privilege of Christians, and in connection therewith the duty incumbent on all believers to take out of their filial standing all the comfort and inspiration it was fitted to yield. Nothing is more fundamental in Pauline hortatory ethics than the exhortation: Stand fast in sonship and its liberties and privileges.

What, then, according to the apostle Paul, are the privileges of the filial state? The catalogue embraces at least these three particulars: (1) freedom from the law; (2) endowment with the spirit of sonship; (3) a right to the future inheritance, heirship. All these benefits are specified in the place in the Epistle to the Galatians which contains the apostle's earliest statement on the subject. That the privilege of sonship involves emancipation from the law is plainly taught in the words: "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." The second benefit is mentioned in the following verse: "And because ye are sons, God sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." The mission of the spirit of sonship was a natural and necessary sequel to the act of adoption. Of what avail were it to make one a son in standing unless he could be made to feel at home in the house? In order that sonship may be real, there must be a spirit answering to the state, that the adopted one may be no longer a slave in feeling but a son indeed. The third benefit, right to the patrimonial estate, is pointed at in the words "But if a son, then an heir, through God."

With regard to the first of these three privileges of son-

[1] *Acts* xvii. 29.

ship, St. Paul is very much in earnest. That the believer in Jesus is free from the law he again and again asserts. No better indication of the strength of his conviction on this point could be desired than the fact of his constructing no fewer than three allegorical arguments to establish or exhibit pictorially his view, those, viz., of the bondwoman and freewoman, the two husbands, and the veil of Moses. These allegories show at once what need there was for labouring the point, how thoroughly the apostle's mind had grasped it so as to be fertile and inventive in modes of presentation, and how much he had the subject at heart so as to be proof against the weariness of iteration.

In his doctrine of emancipation from the law, St. Paul had in view the whole Mosaic law without exception. The whole law as a code of statutes written on stone or in a book, put in the form of an imperative: thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that, with penalties annexed, is, he holds, abolished for the Christian. Whatever remains after the formal act of abrogation, remains for some other reason than because it is in the statute-book. Some parts of the law may remain true for all time as revelation; some precepts may commend themselves to the human conscience in perpetuity as holy, just, and good; but these precepts will come to the Christian in a new form, not as laws written on stone slabs, but as laws written on the heart, as laws of the spirit of a new life. Summed up in love, they will be kept not by constraint, but freely; not out of regard to threatened penalties, but because the love commanded is the very spirit which rules in the heart.

One who dared to represent the state of the believer in Jesus as one of freedom from the Mosaic law, was not likely to have much hesitation in representing Christians as free from the commandments of men. This is rather taken for granted than expressly asserted. Of course all those passages in which St. Paul teaches that Christians

are not bound by scruples as to meats and drinks point in this direction. And the general principle is very adequately stated in the words: "Ye are bought with a price; become not ye the servants of men."[1] For Rabbinical traditions, to which Saul the Pharisee had been a slave, Paul the Christian had no respect whatever. Even the Levitical law which appointed the sacred seasons and their appropriate ritual he characterised as "weak and poverty-stricken elements," to which it were as foolish in Christians to turn again, as it would be for a full-grown man to go back to an infants' school to learn the alphabet.[2] But for the Rabbinical additions to the law he employed a much more contemptuous term. He called them *σκύβαλα*,[3] mere rubbish, never of any use save to puff up with empty pride, and now rejected by him, as a Christian, with loathing.

St. Paul found great difficulty in getting Christians to understand this doctrine of the liberty of a believer in all its comprehensiveness, and to sympathise with his passionate earnestness in maintaining it. He found men everywhere ready to relapse into legalism, and had thus occasion to address to many the warning, "return not again to the yoke of bondage." The history of the Church abundantly proves that there is no part of the apostle's teaching which the average Christian finds harder to understand. In every age, except at creative epochs like the Reformation, the legal spirit exercises extensive sway even over those who imagine themselves to be earnest sup-

[1] 1 *Cor.* vii. 23.

[2] There has recently been a tendency among interpreters to revive the patristic view of *στοιχεῖα*, and to find in the word a reference to the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars, conceived of as living beings, by which the dates of holy seasons were fixed. Devotees who scrupulously observed holy times might very appropriately be represented as enslaved to the heavenly luminaries by whose positions these times were determined. This view is favoured by Lipsius in *Hand-kommentar.*

[3] *Phil.* iii. 8.

porters of Pauline doctrine, and emphatically evangelical in their piety, causing them to be afraid of new spiritual movements, though these may be but the new wine of the kingdom, and obstinately and indiscriminately conservative of old customs and traditions, though these may have lost all life and meaning. Such timidity and blind clinging to the past are not evangelic: they bear the unmistakable brand of legalism. Where the spirit of the Lord is in any signal measure, there will be liberty from bondage to old things, and from fear of new things; power to discern between good and evil, and courage to receive the good from whatever quarter it may come; there, in short, is not the servile spirit of fear, but the manly spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. Such was the spirit of St. Paul, and it is much to be desired that his religious temper may ever be associated with profession of faith in his theological doctrine. The divorce of Pauline theology from the Pauline spirit is to be deplored as tending to create a prejudice not only against *Paulinism*, but even against what St. Paul loved more—evangelic piety; even against the very word "evangelical." Yet what the Church really needs is not less evangelic life, but a great deal more, with all the breadth, strength, freedom, and creative energy that are the true signs of the presence in her midst of the spirit of sonship.[1]

2. This spirit is the second benefit which should accompany and naturally springs out of the state of adoption. This spirit is defined by certain attributes which may be taken as the marks of its presence. St. Paul describes it first, generically, as the Spirit of God's own Son, that is, of Jesus Christ. "Because ye are sons, He hath sent the

[1] Harnack (*Dogmengeschichte*, i. 116) says, "Paulinism has acted as a ferment in the history of dogma, a basis it has never been." But if it has not been a basis in theology, still less has it in its religious spirit exercised a steady ascendancy, to the great loss of the Church.

Spirit of His Son into your hearts."[1] This might be taken as a summary reference to the history of Jesus as the source of the most authentic and reliable information as to the true nature of the spirit of sonship. We may conceive the apostle here saying in effect: "If you want to know how the filial spirit behaves and manifests itself, look at Christ, and see how He bore Himself towards God. His personal piety is the model for us all: go to His school and learn from Him." Is this really what he had in his mind? Or is it merely an ontological proposition he offers us, to this effect: the Spirit who dwells in those who have a genuine filial consciousness is a Spirit sent by God and owned by Christ: the Spirit that proceedeth from the Father and the Son? I cannot believe it. The apostle's thought is dominated here throughout by the ethical interest. He thinks of the Spirit in the believer as a Spirit whose characteristic cry is *Father*, expressive of trust, love, loyal submission and childlike repose. And when he calls that Spirit *Christ's*, he does not mean merely that He is Christ's *property*, but that he is Christ's own spiritual self. The Spirit of God's Son whom God sends into Christian hearts, and who reveals His presence by the child's cry, "Father," is the Spirit who in Him ever uttered that cry in clearest tone and with the ideal fulness of import.

We may therefore find in the expression, "the Spirit of His Son," an appeal to the evangelic history, and the recognition of Christ's personal relation to God as the norm for all Christian piety. How much knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus this presupposes cannot be determined. It may be taken for granted that St. Paul was aware that "Father" was Christ's chosen and habitual name for God. It may be regarded as equally certain that he knew the characteristics of Christ's personal religion to be such as justified reference to Him as the model Son, the pattern

[1] *Gal.* iv. 6.

of filial consciousness as it ought to be. What historical vouchers for these characteristics were known to him we cannot say. We are not entitled to assume that he was acquainted with the prayer which begins, "I thank Thee, O Father,"[1] wherein the filial consciousness of Jesus found classic expression. But we certainly are entitled to affirm that there is no ground for the hypothesis recently put forth by Pfleiderer that this prayer is a composition of the Evangelists, made up of elements drawn from Paul's Epistles, or suggested by Paul's missionary career.[2] That such an utterance should fall from the lips of Jesus is intrinsically probable if the two inferences drawn from St. Paul's statement be allowed. If Jesus ever called God Father and bore Himself towards God so as to give the ideal expression to the filial consciousness, how natural that He should say in words on a suitable occasion what His whole life said in deed! Pfleiderer's scepticism is based on the assumption that Paul, not Jesus, was the originator of the religion of sonship. The assumption is contradicted by Paul's own testimony in the place before us, where he calls the spirit of sonship the Spirit of Christ the Son. Paul being witness, it was Jesus who first introduced into the world the religious spirit whose characteristic cry Godwards is "Father."

It does not belong to my present task as the interpreter of Paulinism to offer an exposition, however brief, of the classic filial utterance of Jesus.[3] But it is competent to point out that the account given in the Pauline literature of the filial spirit in its practical manifestations is in full sympathy with the mind of Christ. The Apostle sets forth the spirit of sonship as a spirit of *trust* in *Romans* viii. 15, where it

[1] *Matt.* xi. 25–27; *Luke* x. 21, 22.

[2] *Vide* his *Urchristenthum*, pp. 445, 446, and for a criticism of his view, *vide* my *Apologetics*, p. 454.

[3] *Vide The Kingdom of God*, chapter vii.

is put in contrast with the spirit of fear characteristic of legalism. In other places he gives prominence to *liberty* as an attribute of the Spirit of sonship. The most striking text in this connection is 2 *Corinthians* iii. 17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord—liberty." It is a great word worthy to be associated with that of Jesus: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," most comprehensive in scope, and susceptible of wide and varying application. Where the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of sonship, is, there is liberty even from the law of God, as a mere external commandment, with its ominous "thou shalt not"; there is liberty from all commandments of men, whether written statutes or unwritten customs; there is liberty from the dead letter of truth which conceals from view the eternal spiritual meaning; there is liberty from the legal temper ever embodying itself in new forms and striving to bring human souls under its thraldom; there is liberty from the bondage of religious fear, which has wrought such havoc as the parent of superstition and will worship; there, finally, is liberty from fear with regard to the ills of life, and the uncertainties of to-morrow; for to one who knows God as a Father, what can there be to be afraid of? If God be for us, who (or what) shall be against us?[1] triumphantly asks St. Paul, echoing the thought of Jesus: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Here is an ample liberty, though the description is by no means exhaustive. But is it not too ample? men anxious for the interests of morality or of ecclesiastical institutions may be inclined to ask. The tendency has always been to be jealous of Christian liberties as broadly asserted by Christ and Paul, and to subject them to severe restrictions lest they should become revolutionary and latitudinarian. Though not straitened either in Christ or in Paul, the Church has

[1] *Rom.* viii. 31.

been much straitened in her own spirit. This jealousy of liberty has been to a large extent uncalled for, and has simply prevented the Church from enjoying to the full her privilege. That liberty may degenerate into license is true. But where the spirit of the Lord is, no such abuse can take place. For the spirit of the Lord is a holy spirit as well as a free spirit, and He will lead Christians to assert their liberty only for holy ends. What risk, *e.g.*, is there to the interests of holiness in the Pauline antinomianism? The law of God stands no more whip in hand saying, "Do this"; no, but the law of God is written on the heart, and the commandment is kept because it no longer is grievous by reason of the terrifying thunder and the threatened penalty. The only difference is that obedience is made easy instead of irksome. Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Heavy is the burden when we carry the sense of duty like the slabs on which the Decalogue was written on our back, but light is the burden when law is transmuted into love, and duty consists in becoming like our Father in heaven. What risk to the interests of religion in the Pauline disregard of ritual, in his doctrine that circumcision and everything of like nature is nothing? It is but getting rid of dead works in order the better to serve the living God, with a truly reasonable, spiritual service, in which all the powers of the inner man earnestly take part. What risk, finally, to the peace of the sacred commonwealth in the decided assertion of the liberty of the Christian conscience from the bondage of petty scrupulosity, when the spirit of Jesus, who dwells in all the sons of God, is not only a spirit of freedom, but not less emphatically a spirit of charity, disposing all who are under its guidance in all things to consider their neighbour for their good unto edification, and also a spirit of wisdom which can discern where concession and forbearance *are* for the good and edification of the whole body of Christ?

This reference to the body of Christ recalls to mind an

important result flowing, according to Pauline teaching, from the spirit of sonship. It is its tendency to remove barriers to Christian fellowship arising out of small matters to which the legal spirit attaches undue value. How closely sonship and brotherhood were connected in the apostle's mind appears from the fact that on the first mention of the sonship of Christians in *Galatians* iii. 26, he proceeds immediately after to speak of the new society based on the Christian faith as one wherein is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. It is easy to find the missing link which connects the two topics. In St. Paul's view, as we know, the first fundamental privilege of sonship is emancipation from the law. But the law was the great barrier between Jews and Gentiles; that removed, there was nothing to prevent them from being united in a Christian brotherhood on equal terms. The partition wall being taken down, the two separated sections of humanity could become one in a new society, having for its motto, Christ all and in all. The accomplishment of this grand union, in which St. Paul took the leading part, was the first great historical exemplification of the connection between the spirit of sonship and the spirit of *Catholicity*. It is obviously not the only possible one. The tendency of the legal spirit at all times is to multiply causes of separation, both in religious faith and in religious practice; in the former, increasing needlessly the number of fundamentals; in the latter, erecting every petty scruple about meats and drinks, and social customs, and forms of worship, to the dignity of a principle dividing from all whose practice is nonconformist. The legal spirit is essentially anti-catholic and separatist, and manifests itself as such in a thousand different ways. On the other hand, the filial spirit is not less essentially catholic; craves for fellowship with all who are sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ; and has the impulse to sweep away the manifold artificial

barriers which dogmatic, pragmatic, self-asserting legalism has set up to the dividing of those who are one in Christ. What a change would come over the face of Christendom if the Spirit of Adoption were poured out in abundant measure on all who bear the Christian name!

3. The third benefit accruing from sonship is *heirship*. "If a son, then an heir";[1] "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."[2] What is the inheritance, and when do the sons enter on it? Are they expectants only, or are they in possession already? Looking to the connection of thought in the Epistle to the Galatians, the sons, according to St. Paul, are in possession, at least, in part. The adoption means that a son who in childhood differed nothing from a servant, becomes a son indeed at the time appointed. Objectively, that time arrived when Christ came; subjectively, it arrived then for all who, like St. Paul, understood the significance of the Christian era. In natural life the heir enters on his inheritance at his father's death. God does not die, and there is no need to wait on that account. Rather Christians enter on their inheritance when they begin truly to live. The inheritance consists in *autonomy*, spiritual freedom; in *spiritual-mindedness*, which is life and peace; in *spiritual buoyancy*, victorious over all the ills of life, fearing nothing, rejoicing even in tribulation because of the healthful discipline and confirmation of character it brings. Truly no imaginary possessions, genuine treasures of the soul!

Yet, here, according to St. Paul, as we gather from the place in *Romans*, the Christian inherits only in part; he is largely an expectant, "saved by hope."[3] For the present is a scene of suffering. Doubtless the tribulations of the present afford the son of God opportunity for showing his heroic temper, and verifying the reality of his sonship. But on the most optimistic view of the present it must be

[1] *Gal.* iv. 7. [2] *Rom.* viii. 17. [3] *Rom.* viii. 24.

admitted that groaning is a large element in human life. The Christian is often obliged to say to himself, It is a weary world. Even the Divine Spirit immanent in him sympathetically shares in his groaning.[1] What is wrong? There is wrong within, defective spiritual vitality.[2] There is wrong in the body; it is still even for the redeemed man a body of Death, and he will not be an effectively, fully-redeemed man till his body has shared in the redemptive process.[3] There is wrong, finally, in the outside world, in the very inanimate, or lower animate creation, needing and crying for redemption from vanity, and travailing in birth-pangs which shall issue in the appearance of the new heavens and the new earth.[4] In view of all these things, St. Paul seems half inclined to cancel his earlier doctrine of the era of sonship dating from the birth of Christ, and, regarding Christians as still sons who differ nothing from a slave, to project the *υἱοθεσία* forward to the era of consummation. For he applies the term, we note, to that era whereof the redemption of the body is the most outstanding feature and symbol. "Waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body."[5] In some codices the word *υἱοθεσίαν* is omitted,[6] why, we can only conjecture. The copyists may have thought it strange that there should be two adoptions, or that a term denoting an imperfect kind of sonship should be applied to the final perfect state, wherein sonship shall be raised to its highest power, its very ideal realised in fellowship with Christ in filial glory. No wonder they stumbled at the expression. For, in truth, the use of the word by the apostle in reference to the future consummation raises the doubt whether we have not been on the wrong track in imagining that when he speaks of the *υἱοθεσία* in

[1] *Rom.* viii. 26.

[2] *Rom.* viii. 23. The believer has only the *firstfruits* of the Spirit: *τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος.*

[3] *Rom.* viii. 23.

[4] *Rom.* viii. 19-22.

[5] *Rom.* viii. 23, last clause.

[6] D, F, G. omit it.

his epistles, he has the Greek or the Roman practice of adoption in view. That use, at all events, shows that if, when it first entered into his mind to avail himself of the term, he was thinking of adoption as practised by either of the two classic nations, he was constrained by his Christian convictions to employ it in a manner which invested it with a new, nobler sense than it had ever before borne. Adoption in Roman law denoted the investment of persons formerly not sons with some measure of filial status; *υἱοθεσία* in St. Paul's vocabulary means the solemn investment of persons formerly sons in an imperfect degree with a sonship worthy of the name, realising the highest possibilities of filial honour and privilege.[1]

A. B. BRUCE.

THE CHURCH AND THE EMPIRE IN THE FIRST CENTURY.

III. THE FIRST EPISTLE ATTRIBUTED TO ST. PETER.

THESE papers attempt to prove that the books of the New Testament which are treated give a picture of the relations between the State and the Christians, which is in itself probable, and which takes up every one of the scanty and incomplete statements of the non-Christian writers bearing on the point, puts each in its proper surroundings, and gives to each a much fuller meaning than it has when taken by itself.

Accordingly, to discuss the two classes of authorities, Pagan and Christian, side by side, was the aim of the lectures in which I treated the subject. The two distinguished authorities to whose criticisms I am replying have

[1] Usteri (*Paulinischer Lehrbegriff*) thinks that as Paul uses the word, the idea of adoption is not to be pressed. *Vide* note on *υἱοθεσία* at p. 194 of the work referred to.