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THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

Notes of Recent Exposition.

PROFESSOR BURKITT has sent a note to the *Journal of Theological Studies* on the meaning of those words of Christ which we translate 'What have I to do with thee?' (Jn 2^4). There is undoubtedly some harshness in the sound of the words. And, as Professor BURKITT says, 'we must all have listened, at some time or other, to well-meant expositions explaining that this speech of our Lord to His Mother at the marriage in Cana of Galilee was not as harsh as it sounds in English.' These explanations, he thinks, have never come to anything. The sense of harshness persists.

It has been felt from the beginning. But it never was felt so keenly as when the Virgin was made the object of adoration. Then it became imperative that something should be done to remove the appearance of harshness. In the Roman Catholic version of the New Testament, which was made at Rheims and was published in 1582, there is an elaborate note on the words. The note excites the contempt of so excellent a scholar as Dr. John LIGHTFOOT. And yet the Rhemish translators, or those they followed, suggest the very translation which is now offered by Professor BURKITT, although he has not a suspicion that he is not the 'first begetter' of it.

The phrase is literally, 'What to me and to thee?' And, by the way, that is how the Rhemish translators render it—'What is to me and thee, woman?'—giving this quaint excuse for the literalness: 'Because this speech is subject to divers senses, we keep the words of our text, lest by turning it into any English phrase, we might straiten the Holy Ghost's intention to some certain sense not intended, or not only intended, and so take away the choice and indifferencie from the reader, whereof (in holy Scripture specially) all translators must beware.'

The reader might well ask what we keep translators for. But let us turn to Professor BURKITT. 'The phrase,' says Professor BURKITT, 'is common enough, both in Greek and Aramaic. It gives us three things, viz. "something" (τί), the speaker (ἐμοί), and the person spoken to (σοί); and, further, it asserts the existence of a gap or disconnexion. What, as a matter of fact, the phrase does not tell us is where the gap is. It may be between *me* and *thee*, but it may equally well be between *us* and *the thing*. I venture to suggest that in Jn 2^4 "What to me and to thee?" means nothing more than "What to us?" We might translate it, "What have I and thou to do with that?"'

The Rhemish translators are not so clear as Professor BURKITT, nor so convinced. 'Christ then'—this is their suggestion—'may mean here,

What is that, Woman, to me and thee, being but strangers, that they want wine?' They proceed to offer an alternative interpretation, which does not greatly differ from that common interpretation with which Professor BURKITT is dissatisfied. They are evidently anxious to prove that, whatever the phrase means, 'it was not a reprehension of our Lady.'

But, to us at least, a difficulty remains. If 'our Lady' is saved, what of our Lord? If we have set right the relations between Him and His mother, have we not put wrong the relations between Him and His hosts? Is it likely that Jesus would have said regarding any one who was in trouble, 'What have I to do with that?'

Professor BURKITT has more to say. He says that there is a phrase used by modern Egyptians which in sound is almost identical with the phrase we are considering. It is *mā 'alēsh*, which literally translated is 'It is not my business.' But that is not the meaning intended. The phrase is used by modern Egyptians both for 'I beg your pardon!' and 'Never mind!' That, says Professor BURKITT, is what we require. In colloquial language, in language which would be familiar to His mother, He simply said, 'Never mind!' or 'Do not worry!' Did He smile as He said it? In any case she understood, and gave the order, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.'

Mr. F. B. MEYER, representing the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, has issued the *Free Church Year Book* for 1912. It contains the official report of the Seventeenth National Council, which was held at Cheltenham in the month of March. It contains, as part of that report, an address by Sir W. M. RAMSAY on 'Some Aspects of Sacred Archæology.'

Professor RAMSAY wanted elbow-room; therefore he said 'Some Aspects.' In reality he confined himself to the writings of St. Luke. For he had scarcely begun his address when he felt that if he was to say anything that was worth saying within the hour, he must concentrate somewhere. And he had no hesitation in concentrating on St. Luke, since there is no subject he himself is so familiar with, and none which can show such a turn-over of opinion within these twenty years.

Twenty years ago, says Professor RAMSAY, there was no book in the New Testament whose credibility was regarded with such suspicion as the Acts of the Apostles. The case is altered now. On the whole it may be said with truth that it is the Gospel that now stands most in need of defence, and the Acts that has best survived the ordeal. But he has reason to show, and he shows it within the brief space of this address, that St. Luke's credibility as a historian is now well established in respect of the Gospel as well as the Acts.

First of all he refers to that suspicious statement in the fourteenth chapter of the Acts, that Paul and Barnabas fled from Iconium into Lycaonia. Iconium was the capital of Lycaonia. It is as much as to say that a prisoner fled from Edinburgh into Midlothian, or from London into England. 'It showed that the writer imagined Iconium to be outside of Lycaonia, whereas every book on ancient geography will tell you that Iconium was its capital.' It is true that many centuries before Luke wrote Iconium had been Phrygian. The conclusion was that the writer of the Acts had learned this fact from some geographical school book, and, not knowing anything of the locality himself, had imagined that Iconium was Phrygian still. 'It is by blunders like this that the forger is detected and proved: he does not relate facts, he states his own true or false opinions.'

It happened, however, that one day Professor RAMSAY was reading the *Acta* of the martyrdom of Justin at Rome, a good second-century narrative. One of the Roman Christians, who was a fellow-prisoner of Justin, describes himself in that narrative as having been brought from Iconium *of Phrygia*.

The editor of the *Acta* proposed to substitute Lycaonia for Phrygia.

But Professor RAMSAY remembered the fourteenth chapter of Acts. St. Luke had spoken of going out of Iconium into Lycaonia, and here was a slave, who having been born and brought up in Iconium, spoke of it as a city of Phrygia. It was evident that both he and St. Luke were speaking not of the actual fact but of the local feeling and after the local custom. 'Instead of a silly anachronism on St. Luke's part, a detail had emerged which proved St. Paul's intimate acquaintance with the ideas of the people in the city'—for no doubt St. Paul was St. Luke's authority for the statement.

Is the evidence sufficient? Professor RAMSAY was content with it. But he admits that it was not sufficient to convince everybody. If only he could find proof that the language of Iconium was Phrygian. He did not find that proof till 1910.

In 1910 he went to Iconium. He found a quarrel going on between the municipal authorities and the Imperial Museum. The municipality were digging for building stones in the castle hill. As the stones were dug up they were found to have inscriptions on them, and were consequently claimed by the Museum. The city refused to dig simply to enrich a government institution. 'At this moment we came upon the scene. I happened to be in possession of some money for excavation —a very rare condition with me, for my work has always been hampered by poverty; the money in this case was Lord Strathcona's. We offered to do the excavations and to present all the uninscribed stones to the city and the inscribed to the Museum.' When the language on the inscribed stones was examined, it was found to be Phrygian. The Phrygian language was still spoken in Iconium and used on epitaphs as late as the third century after Christ. The proof was complete.

But Professor RAMSAY, as we know, did not wait to make his proof complete. When he discovered from the *Acta* of Justin's martyrdom that the inhabitants of Iconium spoke of themselves as Phrygian, he maintained that as a historian St. Luke was to be relied on. Whereupon 'a German scholar, in a hostile and rather contemptuous notice of my book, challenged me to apply my view of St. Luke's reliability as a historian to the first five verses of the second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.'

It is the narrative of the census. We need not go over it all again. The story of the discovery that Augustus made a decree that the Empire should be periodically subjected to a census is very well known. The period being fourteen years, and the census of 6 A.D. being attested by Josephus, the previous census, which would be 'the first,' as St. Luke calls it, would fall in the year 8 B.C., the very time when (according to the new reckoning of the birth of Jesus) it is placed in the Gospel.

But the difficulties of St. Luke's narrative were not all removed yet. A greater difficulty by far than the census itself was the statement that the people were ordered to go to their native place to be registered. This statement was contrary not only to Roman custom, but also to Roman principle. It was opposed to progress, to freedom, and to education. Professor RAMSAY suggested that this part of the decree probably applied only to Palestine, and that it was due to the necessity of recognizing the old Hebrew tribal system. It was a guess and a clever one. But it was wrong.

Since that guess was made, however, it has been proved that, not in Palestine only, but also at least in Egypt and in Thrace, the people were ordered to return to their proper domicile in view of an approaching census. There is an edict of a Prefect in Egypt in the second century to that effect; and there is a proclamation of the municipality of Mesembria in Thrace, ordering all citizens to return to the city for the census. It is true that

such an order was un-Roman and un-progressive. The Romans simply found that local custom was too strong for them.

And in course of time this custom was the undoing of all the good which the Romans did on behalf of liberty and the progress of the people. For the time came when the lower classes were not only compelled to come to their native city for enrolment, but were forbidden ever to *leave* their native city. And thus grew up the system of serfdom, the serf being attached to the soil and scarcely considered more separate from it than the cattle that grazed on its pastures, a system from which Europe has not wholly escaped even to this day.

To the *Church Family Newspaper* of July 12th, Mr. A. C. BENSON contributes an article on Nicodemus. He does not often write on Bible names or Bible topics. But when he does there is a freshness in his writing—a freshness that is without offence—which is very attractive. It is not always so with the literary man when he touches the Bible. Even when he is sympathetic and sincere, as Mr. Richard le GALLIENNE, there is a sense of blundering. The materials are there, but they seem to be in confusion, which is due no doubt to the lack of familiarity. But the son of Archbishop BENSON is familiar with the Bible. He writes with the detachment of the literary man, but he knows what he is writing about.

Mr. BENSON believes that Nicodemus had made a definite appointment to see Jesus. 'A man of his position could hardly risk wandering into an obscure part of the city, on the chance of finding a popular leader, with many adherents, alone.' The whole description of the interview, he thinks, reads like a prearranged meeting. Nicodemus has his questions ready, and he has made up his mind beforehand how he means to approach the subject.

More than that, Mr. BENSON believes that no one was present at the interview except Nicodemus and our Lord. 'The whole scene suggests a tête-à-tête conversation. I cannot believe that Nicodemus would have risked the presence of any disciples; the talk is frank and intimate, evidently without auditors.' How then did St. John report it? He believes that the account of the interview was given by Christ Himself to the Apostles afterwards.

This compels Mr. BENSON to tell us what he thinks about the style of the narrative. His opinion is that the style is St. John's, but the substance is our Lord's. In the first place, Jesus told the story in Aramaic, and St. John had to translate it into Greek. In the second place, he translated it into his own Greek, just as a reporter constantly does in our day.

On this important point Cardinal NEWMAN once spoke some courageous words, and Mr. BENSON quotes them with approval. 'Every one,' said the Cardinal, 'writes in his own style. St. John gives our Lord's meaning in his own way. At that time the third person was not so commonly used in history as now. When a reporter gives one of Gladstone's speeches in the newspaper, if he uses the first person, I understand not only the matter, but the style, the words to be Gladstone's; when he uses the third person, I consider the style to be the reporter's own. But in ancient times this distinction was not made. Thucydides uses the dramatic method, yet Spartan and Athenian speak in Thucydidean Greek. And so every clause of our Lord's speeches in St. John may be in St. John's Greek, yet every clause may contain the matter which our Lord spoke in Aramaic. Again, St. John might and did select or condense the matter of our Lord's discourses, as that with Nicodemus, and thereby the wording might be St. John's, though the matter might still be our Lord's.'

This leads Mr. BENSON to say that in his judgment there is no change of speaker as the chapter

proceeds. What follows the last words spoken by Nicodemus 'is plainly—at least to my mind—a condensation of our Lord's answers to many questions of Nicodemus. Some have indeed held that the later words of the section are the comment made by the evangelist. But I do not myself feel that. It looks to me as if Nicodemus had attempted argument from the Old Testament records. Our Lord's words about "no man hath ascended up to heaven," and the allusion to Moses and the brazen serpent, which have no very apparent connection with each other, look like His answers to incidents referred to by Nicodemus. And the last verses seem to me like very plain allusions to the secrecy of the visit, and the unwillingness of Nicodemus to say boldly before his fellow-rulers what he believed. "He that believeth not is condemned already" seems to me a clear reference to the hesitation of Nicodemus; and the further allusion to the darkness, and the words, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light," appear to me to be the plainest possible reference to the fact that Nicodemus had chosen to come secretly and by night for his interview, all translated on to a higher plane of thought.'

So we are to think of this interview as taking place by night in some humble lodging in Jerusalem. Nicodemus leaves his own great house, muffled up so as to avoid observation. He is admitted, perhaps by our Saviour's own hand. And there, 'in the bare room, with the winking lamp and its fluttering flame,' the strange tête-à-tête takes place. What did Nicodemus think of it afterwards? Mr. Benson follows him down the years. 'I think of him as a sorrowful man, wishing that he had acted otherwise, wondering why he could not have followed the truth, perhaps secretly helping the Christians as far as he could; but I do not believe that his anxiety and his belief, such as it was, was forgotten, or his pathetic gift of myrrh and aloes for the tomb. I think he was one of those of whom Christ said lovingly, "He that is not against us is with us"; and I believe that he has long since found the answer to his faint inquiries, and perhaps, too, the courage of his convictions; and is only sorry, with a heavenly sorrow, that he could not have spoken as plainly as he wished, and as perhaps he meant to do, when he made his way through the dark streets, after his long talk, to the great familiar house; and then felt that he could not give up all the comfort and honour of his place in the world, for bare lodgings and the society of outcast and humble folk, even for the sake of One who seemed to him indeed a teacher come from God.'

The Judging or Critical Temper.

By Alexander Souter, D.Litt., Professor of Humanity in the University of Aberdeen.[1]

Mt 7^1, 'Judge not [*or rather* Cease judging], that ye be not judged,' or as Lk 6^{37} has it, probably more exactly, 'Cease judging, and you will not be judged.' It will be instructive to read what follows in Matthew. 'For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. And why beholdest thou the mote (the tiny particle of wood) that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me put out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Hypocrite, put out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to put out the mote out of thy brother's eye.'

Ro 14^4, 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.'

It was maintained by a well-known writer of the

[1] Preached in King's College Chapel, University of Aberdeen, June 2nd, 1912.