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Testament if we regard it, as past generations did, as primarily a text-book of theology. 'It has two or three theologies in the making, and I doubt if it is possible to harmonise them.' The New Testament sprang not out of libraries or studies, but out of the lives of toiling men and women, from the great industrial centres of the Empire and the fishing towns of the Lake of Galilee. It is a *volksbuch*, as Luther called it, written not in literary Greek at all, but in the spoken vernacular of the Mediterranean.

So the New Testament is a book of life, a record of the Christian experience at its highest and most creative moment. To try to eternalize the thought-forms in which this experience is expressed is to be untrue to the book's own genius. These thought-forms are not ours. We have to translate them. Take, e.g., what is called 'Paulinism.' Paul tried to express a mystical experience in the metaphors of a Jewish law-court. And industrious people have taken his words and made out of these temporary and local forms a dogmatic system! 'If there is one thing that the religious chaos of the last four centuries has shown us clearly, it is that any attempt to base theologies on isolated New Testament phrases only results in fissiparous sectarianism.'

The authority of the New Testament reposes on one fact, that it mirrors the new life at its highest and its truest to itself. 'Just in so far as we are not limited by it, but allow it to live itself out into

new conditions, we can take the New Testament as a lasting authority. We can only settle problems about the rightfulness of this or that by setting them in the presence of the New Testament spirit. Are they true to that? If so, they are genuinely Christian. If not, they are condemned.'

One of the most depressing things about the Christianity of our day is that it has drifted so far away from the New Testament. Ordination candidates to-day can give you definitions of dogma and 'the results of Biblical criticism,' but they do not know the New Testament. And yet all big renewals in the Church's life have sprung from a return to it. If there is such a return now, it will have two results—one in our life, another in our thinking.

The result in life is obvious. But it would revolutionize theology as well. Our religious thinking to-day is second-hand. Theology to-day means learning what other people have thought about God. Academic theology is bankrupt, and probably we must start almost afresh. The current religious phraseology has almost ceased to have a meaning for the mass of men and women. The continued use of it is disastrous. We want a new language to express a new life, just as the New Testament language expressed its life. 'A return to New Testament authority, a reception of the New Testament spirit, an experimental living in its way—these are the paths to revival in religion, to strength and reality in Christian thinking.'

Atbanasiana.

BY PROFESSOR ADOLF DEISSMANN, D.THEOL., D.D., THE UNIVERSITY, BERLIN.

I.

IN the spring of 1923, while I was in London after a somewhat prolonged lecturing tour in England and Wales, Mr. H. Idris Bell, the distinguished papyrologist of the British Museum, showed me a

recently acquired papyrus of the fourth century A.D. which struck me as being of very great importance for the history of the period of St. Athanasius. This was a letter written by a Meletian with reference to an attack upon certain Meletian dignitaries in Alexandria, which, if not actually brought about,

had at least been sanctioned, by the great champion of orthodoxy.

At the period in question Meletius, Bishop of Lycopolis, in Egypt, had been dead for some ten years. His form of heresy had to do not so much with doctrine as with the practical policy of the Church. Amid the disorders incidental to the great persecution, he had undertaken the oversight of his co-believers in the parishes and dioceses of others, performed rites of consecration, and thus formally infringed the prerogatives of the regular bishops. The vehement resistance to these doings, especially on the part of Peter, metropolitan of Alexandria, led to the founding of a separate Meletian church, which, sustained as it was by powerful moral and religious forces, maintained its existence in Egypt for several generations. Mr. Bell's discovery seemed to furnish us for the first time with an original document of this important chapter of Church history, and, among those who had heard of it, its publication was looked forward to with eager interest.

A volume containing the letter has just been given to the public by Mr. Bell,¹ and all our expectations are left far behind. Here, besides the letter referred to, written *c.* A.D. 335, we have a considerable group of Greek and Coptic MSS—letters mainly—written by Meletians *c.* A.D. 330–340, and, as if that were not enough, a further series of Christian autographs, of about the same date, from the correspondence of one Paphnutius, an Egyptian whose prayers wrought miracles, as well as a long letter addressed to the Alexandrians by the Emperor Claudius in A.D. 41. The decipherment is of the clearest and most careful kind, the exposition and appraisal are most searching, revealing an astonishing grasp of international and especially of German research in Church history, and the whole is embellished with superb facsimiles of the more important leaves. So splendid a gift to scholarship adds fresh distinction to the author's name.

II.

The historical unity of this fine collection of new London papyri lies in the fact that all the included documents bear serviceably upon the history of Roman Egypt, and especially of its

¹ *Jews and Christians in Egypt: The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy*, London, 1924.

great capital, Alexandria. They might also be characterized as monuments of passion, of that national and religious fanaticism which, so to speak, made the pogrom an all but normal institution of social life. The letter of Claudius reveals a background on which, in the age of Philo and the Apostle Paul, the Jews and Gentiles of Alexandria stand face to face in mortal enmity; similarly, three hundred years later, the bad blood between the orthodox and the heretic leaves its trail in the literary relics of the Meletian conflict.

The Claudius letter of A.D. 41 will doubtless become a subject for much discussion. In my opinion it is an altogether unique source for the Cæsar cult in Egypt, and it radiates much fresh light in other respects. To take but a single point, I have always found it difficult to account for the fact that the Apostle of the Gentiles never visited Egypt. I sought an explanation in the theory that in the normative beginnings of St. Paul's work, when he was setting his course, the Jewish commotions under Caligula, as recorded in Philo and other sources, made Egypt too intractable a soil. Now, however, in the letter before us—written, let us remember, to the Jews in Alexandria equally with the other residents—we find Claudius, the successor of Caligula, issuing a warning of the gravest kind against an influx of Syrian Jews into the city. Clearly, therefore, the obstacles to a Christian mission in Egypt were of a most serious nature.

III.

The Meletian group comprises ten papyri of varying length in Greek or Coptic, nearly all of them, as said above, being letters, most of which, again, are addressed to a certain Apa Paiêous, a confessor in the great persecution. It is true that in the sources for the history of the Meletian controversy published by Maffei we already had a number of letters dating from the early days of the schism, but the London papyri have the peculiar interest of being originals—'survivals,' in the language of modern historical methodology; moreover, they come from the Meletian camp, whereas most of what we already knew came from the Athanasian side. We cannot here even sketch the rich contents of these documents; suffice it to note that we find in them chronological data of great value; *e.g.* as regards the Synod of Cæsarea, which Eduard Schwartz assigned to A.D. 333, Mr.

Bell has been enabled to fix its date as the 19th of March 334. The authority for this is Papyrus No. 1913, which, characteristically enough, states that the object of the Synod was to decide regarding the purification of the Holy Christian Body (πρὸς διάκρισιν περ[ὶ] κ[α]θαρισμοῦ < τοῦ > ἁγίου Χρηστιανικοῦ [π]λήθους).

The gem of this collection is Papyrus No. 1914, a long letter written in May or June, 335 (probably), by a monk or priest named Callistus. To read this moving document with a little historical imagination is to find oneself set down amidst the tangible realities of early Christian life—more directly, in fact, than one could be by the most brilliant historical painting of the great masters. Unfortunately the realities are not all of a pleasing kind, though for the most part the Meletians, with their heroic joy in martyrdom, appeal strongly to our sympathies. The Meletian bishop of Letopolis, Isaac, visits Pope (πάππας) Heraiscus, leader of the Meletians in Alexandria, and takes a meal with him in the ‘camp.’ The adherents of Athanasius, incensed at the presence of the heretical bishop in the city, force their way, along with drunken soldiers, into the camp with the intention of seizing their adversaries. Bishop Isaac and Pope Heraiscus, however, are rescued by ‘God-fearing’ troops of their own camp. Then the fury of the undisciplined squad gluts itself in the savage maiming of other four Meletians. The angry rabble hurries thereafter to an inn by the Gate of the Sun, where some of the heretics were lodging, threaten the landlord, lay hold upon a number of his guests, who are then thrust into gaol. Now, however, the commanding officer, the *praepositus*, finds the affair most distasteful, and sends a message to the bishop: ‘To-night in a state of drink I committed sin when I ill-used the brethren.’ . . . ‘And because of the sin thus committed he, though a Hellene [*i.e.* heathen], took the Agape [the Holy Supper] that same day.’

In the background of all this—and we touch here the strongly dramatic element in this fragment of early Church life—stands the great shadow of Athanasius. It is he whom the letter-writer makes ultimately responsible; the writer, in fact, gives a whole list of outrages wrought by that prince of the Church against the Meletians. In the eyes of Callistus, Athanasius is anything but the man of granite, inflexible in the native strength of his personality. On the contrary, he is fidgety, nervous,

apprehensive. His own position is not secure; dismal enough are the reports of ecclesiastical affairs that come from the Emperor Constantine. The primate’s baggage, all packed for a flight, has already been in the ship out there in the harbour; but the waverer has had it brought back to the city. To flee or not to flee? A shiftless and irresolute man! Assuredly not all of this will be mere misrepresentation.

IV.

The documents connected with the name of Paphnutius consist of seven letters, all of them most likely addressed to him. This Paphnutius, or Papnutius, is an old acquaintance. Many years ago, in my *Septuaginta-Papyri*,¹ I published an excerpt from the papyrus collection of Heidelberg University Library in the form of a letter written to Papnutius by a certain Justinus; the text is given also in my *Licht vom Osten*.² That letter and the London group alike come to us from the belongings of one and the same person, a Christian anchorite of the days of Athanasius. Paphnutius must have formed the centre of a widespread religious intercourse, for his prayers were reputed to be of quite extraordinary power, and great numbers of afflicted people sought eagerly for the intercessions of this ‘Christ-bearer’ (Χρηστοφόρος). As might be expected, these letters provide astonishingly valuable materials for the history of actual Christian piety in the period of the great dogmatic conflicts, and will be of much service in that regard. They form a class by themselves, and one not less valuable than the group already mentioned; and this holds good even if a certain conjecture of Mr. Bell—at first sight all but incredible—should in the end fail to find confirmation.

The conjecture in question—advanced by Mr. Bell, it is true, with intimations of his own misgivings—is that Papyrus No. 1929 is probably an original letter, an actual autograph, of St. Athanasius himself. A suggestion like this, set forth in cold print, almost takes away one’s breath, and I venture to think that, when the theory comes to be known, it will not go unchallenged. Still, when so experienced an investigator, on the ground of the language, the contents, and the outward form of the letter,

¹ *Veröffentlichungen aus der Heidelberger Papyrus-Sammlung*, i. (*Die Septuaginta-Papyri und andere altchristliche Texte*), Heidelberg, 1905, No. 6, pp. 94-104.

² 4th edition, Tübingen, 1923, p. 182 f.

and of analogous phenomena in other letters of the time and in the letters and writings of St. Athanasius himself, propounds such a startling theory, we must listen with respect. These Meletian leaves, be it remembered, come from the very *milieu* in which the great figure of St. Athanasius moved, so that the discovery of an autograph letter from his hand cannot be deemed impossible. The letter contains a request for the intercessory prayers of Paphnutius in view of the sore sickness that lies upon the house of the writer—*Athanasius*. A true letter, therefore; not a literary epistle on matters of dogmatic controversy. Now it is well known that St. Athanasius cultivated friendly relations with the monks, and it is certainly not inconceivable that the imperious director of souls should require the intercession of a 'Father' for his own needs. I reserve my own judgment as to the authorship of the letter until I have compared certain definite details which seem to me capable of being tested. Here, meanwhile, I give the letter in an English rendering. Even those who see in it no more than a document of Egyptian Christianity in the age of the famous orthodox theologian will nevertheless prize it highly as such.

'To the most dear and beloved Father Paphnutius, Athanasius (sends) greeting in the Lord God.

'May Almighty God and His Christ grant that

your Piety (*θεοσέβεια*) may long abide among us and remember us in your prayers. For as long as your Holiness (*ἀγιότης*) continues in this, it will be for our welfare in all things. To-day, then, I ask you for specially fervent remembrance. For the prayers offered by you are heard because of your holy love. And as you will ever entreat in holy prayers, [it will avail] on our behalf. I do but acknowledge what is right in believing that in all ways you have us in remembrance. For I assuredly know that you love us. I am in very great concern regarding Didyma and mother. For Didyma . . ., and my mother is sick. I have therefore much to contend with, especially as I am ill myself, and sorely enfeebled. But I believe in Him who is the Saviour of us all. In the midst of these distresses we are glad that by your solicitude it was possible for you to send Horion, the good son, to us.

'Theodosius, . . ., Antiochus, Didyma, mother, all who belong to our household, tender you many obeisances and many greetings, most dear and beloved Father. May Divine Providence long, long preserve you, and keep you ever in remembrance of us, beloved and most dear!'

Address on the verso :

'To the most dear and beloved Father Paphnutius, Athanasius in the Lord God.'

Literature.

THE CHRIST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The Christ of the New Testament, by Mr. Paul Elmer More (Milford; 13s. 6d. net), is the third volume in the series 'The Greek Tradition from the Death of Socrates to the Council of Chalcedon.' This book does not take one over a beaten track. This would be sufficiently evident from the statements on p. 119, that 'the Kantian metaphysical spells death to philosophy, and that the Lutheran theology spells death to religion,' and that the German conceit of what Kant accomplished is one of the great barriers in the way of philosophical and spiritual truth.

The writer makes clear his position—that he is

trying to do two things which are commonly regarded as incompatible. On the one hand, he fully accepts the results of the modern critical study of the Christian documents. On the other hand, he wishes to maintain the Christology of the creeds, or something like it, and to insist on the element of mystery, the supernatural if you will, in life, and especially in the revelation given in Jesus. The psychological materialists and the Berkeleyans cannot both be right, and it may well be that they are both wrong. Mr. More thinks that Dr. Johnson's contemptuous kicking of the stone was a sufficient answer to Berkeley; and, on the other hand, the results of the modern psychologists who are trying to define mind in terms of body are