

it like a wolf from them, and giving it in the synagogues of the Gentiles. And until the consummation of the ages shall he be in the synagogues of the Gentiles, and among their rulers, as a strain of music in the mouth of all. And in the Holy Books shall he be written, both his work and word, and he shall be the chosen of God for ever."

There is no shadow of doubt but that by "one who in latter times should arise from the seed of Benjamin, the beloved of the Lord," Paul is alluded to. It has been referred to above that the writer of the "Testaments" possessed, and seems to have made especial use of, St. Luke's Gospel (the gospel of Paul), the Acts, and several of Paul's Epistles. These words in the "Testament of Benjamin," then, tell us in *what category* the writings of the blessed Paul were placed by Christian Jews living in the early years of the second century—that is to say, within twenty years, probably, after the death of St. John.

They were reckoned among the "*Holy Books*," a familiar phrase for the Old Testament Scriptures. These writings of the blessed Paul, including the Gospel of St. Luke, the Acts, and most of the Epistles bearing his name, among those Jewish congregations at the close of the first and beginning of the second century, to whom the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" were especially addressed, were certainly esteemed as forming part of the most sacred volume of Old Testament Scriptures.

H. DONALD M. SPENCE, D.D.

THE DEANERY, GLOUCESTER.  
March, 1891.

---

The writer of the above little study especially desires to express his obligation to "Die Testamente der Zwölf Patriarchen," Friederich Schnapp, Halle, 1889; to Professor B. B. Warfield's exhaustive essay in the *Presbyterian Review*, New York, 1880; to Dr. Pick's (of Alleghany, Pa.) study in the *Lutheran Church Review*, 1885; to Dr. Sinker, of Trinity College, Cambridge, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," Text and Introduction, 1869.

---

#### ART. IV.—NOTES AND COMMENTS ON ST. JOHN XXI.

##### No. IV.

**I**N the previous section we studied the narrative of St. Peter's three confessions of love to his Master, and his Master's thrice-repeated restoration and commission of him as a shepherd of the flock. Without returning at any length to that scene, I wish only to notice two or three detached points in it.

i. The use of the words *φιλεῖν* and *ἀγαπᾶν*. Is this an incidental evidence that our Lord sometimes used the Greek language in conversation with His own friends? The Aramaic has no parallel distinction of verbs; and, on the other hand, no one who reads St. John's style with attention can well doubt that a distinction of verbs is intended here by him. Dr. A. Roberts, one of the New Testament Revisers, in his *Discussions on the Gospels*, has made out a very interesting case for the familiar use of Greek in Palestine about the time of the First Advent; and he thinks that we have here a narrative which implies such use. Undoubtedly Aramaic was in large and frequent use. Again and again the Saviour's Aramaic words to individuals are recorded; and St. Paul delivered a long address in Aramaic to the crowds in the Temple court. But are not these incidents so recorded as to suggest that the rule was, at least, very often broken? In any case, Greek *was* spoken, very much as English is spoken in Ireland. And why should not the Lord Jesus have employed it on this occasion, even if His usage were the other way, if only to bring out a sacred lesson as to different qualities of love? On the other hand, even should it be shown beyond doubt that Aramaic was spoken that morning by the lake, we need not regard the difference of verbs in the Greek record as unimportant. I should then venture to think that the Holy Inspirer, guiding the Apostle's mind, led him to the use of words which would bring out the thought, the *animus*, of the colloquy more clearly than a verbatim record would have done, leaving out as it must the explanations given by the voices and manner of the speakers. But I do not think we need doubt that Greek was the language of that hour.

ii. As to the actual avowal by St. Peter of *φιλία*, not *ἀγάπη*. I see that Bishop Wordsworth takes the view suggested in the last paper—that self-distrust and a sacred sense of the Lord's glory leads St. Peter to his *φιλῶ σε*, and bids him shrink from *ἀγαπῶ σε*, as an utterance too lofty for his deeply humbled heart. The Bishop remarks very beautifully (I said a few words in the last paper in this direction) that the Saviour, while accepting at length Peter's lower word, yet knew that he would have grace to live the higher word. Wonderfully is this illustrated by the Saint's precious Epistles. Where does the New Testament breathe a more serene and heavenly love for the Lord than there? And yet it is a love intense and individual too—*φιλία* at the heart of *ἀγάπη*: "Him ye love (*ἀγαπᾶτε*) with joy unspeakable." And so let it be with each Christian generation and each Christian heart. The steadfast, heaven-given, choice of Christ and rest in Him must have within it also the sacred emotion of personal and grateful

delight. Ever to the end, and beyond the end, shall we be saying as we look on HIM: *φιλω σε, Κύριε*.

iii. The commission to Peter: "Feed my lambs—my sheep; shepherd my sheep." Perhaps the word "lambs" is not, so to speak, separative here, marking off a class different from the "sheep." It may be just the *προβατρία* from another point of view; much as in 1 Joh. ii., where surely "Fathers," "Youths," "Little ones," are terms descriptive of true disciples from different *sides*. All the Lord's "sheep" are in some respects "lambs"; tender and adolescent to the end, compared with what they shall be hereafter. Yet it is impossible not to read in the words at least a suggestion to the pastor to remember specially the specially lamb-like of the flock, the very weak and the very young.

iv. Let us remember too the twice repeated "feed," *βόσκει*, which is thus indicated as the main particular in the "shepherding." Feed them, give them provender; that food which is the Lord Himself, beheld, believed, received, beloved. Let this be the alpha and omega of the Christian minister's shepherding, whatever else goes with it as assistant and subsidiary. "The hungry sheep look up and *are not fed*," says Milton in a well-known passage, stigmatizing the unfaithful, unspiritual pastors of his young days. Do not let the words be true of the Lord's shepherds now. It is all too possible to keep the flock of Christ in a most undesirable sort of *fast*, both in and out of Lent; a fast from Christ set forth before them in His finished sacrifice, and never-ending life, love, and power.

Would the clergy be safe from the risk of proving, whether they know it or not, starvation preachers? Then let them every day, "with keen despatch of real hunger," be found feeding for themselves on Christ Jesus the Lord. *Unde vivo, inde dico; in quo pascor, hoc ministro*.

v. Lastly, observe the Lord's phrase, *τὰ ἀρνία μου*, My lambs, My flock, not thine. It is too easy in practice to forget it. There is a sense in which of course the man must think of class, school, parish, church, as "mine"; in the sense of personal responsibility and heart interest. But much more still must he watch and pray that he may think of them all as "Thine." And to do so will be a powerful and manifold assistance in the ministry. It will cheer, solemnize, tranquillize the pastor. It will cheer him, as reminding him that his Lord's interest in his charge is far deeper than his own can be. It will solemnize him, as reminding him of his own intensely direct relations with his Lord as His underling. It will tranquillize him, because there is nothing which more distracts us and disturbs us than self-consciousness and self-love, nothing which more settles and strengthens us than

simple love to Him. Realizing that the flock, the sheep, the lambs, are HIS, we pastors shall labour for them more purely and more happily; and we shall also be more ready if it should please Him to put us and our efforts quite aside and hand the dear charge over to another. They are HIS; we are HIS. For the under-shepherd is himself also, blessed thought, one of the Chief Shepherd's flock.

But now without delay let us pass onward to the pregnant conclusion of the narrative.

Ver. 18. The Saviour couples at once with His commission to Peter the prediction for him of a martyr's death. It comes with all the solemnity of the double *verily*. "*Verily, verily, I say to you, when you were a younger man, you were used to tie your own girdle, and to walk where you would; but when you have grown old, you shall stretch out your hands, and another shall tie your girdle, and carry you where you would not. Now this He said, as indicating by what sort of death he was to glorify God. And with that word He says to him, Follow Me.*"

A remark or two on words and construction is called for. *When you were a younger man.* The Lord Jesus is referring to the time of Peter's life then present. Just such an act of free choice and vigorous independent motion had Peter done, when he had "*girt his upper coat upon him, and thrown himself into the lake.*" "*When you were*" is an anticipatory phrase, a prolepsis; it looks back as if already from the time of Peter's death. (Parallels are not unfrequent; see the interesting one, 1 Cor. xiii. 12: "*Then shall I know even as I was known,*" *καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.*) "*In the days of thy youth*" is the practical meaning of the expression. There seems to be at least a high likelihood that the Apostles were very much of an age with their blessed Master. Conventional art has usually represented them as all, excepting St. John, men of elderly years. Far more probably they were at most thirty-five years old; a probability which may help us to understand them on many occasions in their impulses and mistakes.

"*In the days of thy youth*" then; the days now fast passing, to be followed so soon by the far different and quickly aging life of the apostolic evangelist and pastor. He had been used to choose his own path in those days, in these days. But a change should come; he should live to be old; and then, on some special occasion, in some memorable way, he should choose the path no more. He should stretch out his hands; and another should gird him; and the path should be one which he did not choose, a path against his choice, and along which he should be *carried*.

We now well know what the Lord meant, whatever at the moment these first hearers understood in detail. St. John at once applies them to his friend's death, and to that death as a special occasion of the glorification of God, and as evidently caused by man—that is, a martyr-death. The future, *δοξάσει*, "shall glorify," does not imply (I hardly need say) that the event was still future when John wrote; it was only future when Jesus spoke. It is practically quite certain that many years before this narrative was written at Ephesus Peter had died unto the Lord: the prophecy had been fully expounded by the event. And we need not doubt that the death was by crucifixion; indeed, the words here about the outstretched hands may assure us of this. The well-known further particulars of the martyrdom, that it was at Rome (where now stands the Church of S. Pietro in Montorio, on the far-seeing Janiculum), and that the saint died head downwards, rest on a very different quality of evidence; though we need not seriously doubt about Rome as the locality. As to the inverted attitude, it is Origen who first, of extant writers, speaks of it; and he wrote five generations later. It may have been.

"Where you do not choose"—to a death of violence and pain. Yes, let us remember. Peter, the saint indeed, did not choose pain as pain and death as death. That is the act of mental and spiritual aberration. What he did choose was obedience to his Lord, fidelity to his Lord, and the Lord's glorious presence after that painful passage to it. But from the passage human nature shrank in Peter, even as the Lord Himself in His own true human nature, absolutely identical with ours, had shrunk from His own agony. I allude to this manifest fact in passing, because it is an instance of what we everywhere find in Scripture, the deeply and truly *natural* aspect in which in it the Christian life is presented. That life is not the extinction of nature; it is its transfiguration, as the heart's love and the will's choice are fixed upon the supreme and all-satisfying Object. It does not make man unhuman. It is a new man, but still man. And man, as man, can never like pain, or grief, or death, for its own sake.

This obvious remark has a bearing on the value of the earliest Christian martyrdoms as a testimony to the Gospel truth. Had they been theatrical displays of unnatural courage they would have borne feeble witness to the solidity of the facts which the martyrs confessed and for confessing which they died. The body might in that case have been given to the stones, or the steel, by a motive no better than a diseased spiritual ambition, a personal and emulous desire for a high place in the coming glory as the reward of special pain. But Stephen, James, Peter, and Paul died not so. They did not

choose or court death. They chose Christ and His truth, and died rather than deny it. And here, in their calmness and spiritual sanity, in their willingness not to die if it could be avoided rightly, lies the weight and power of their *witness*, their *μαρτυρία*. It appears as a witness indeed; not a display of their courage so much as an indication of the strong solidity of the basis of truth beneath their feet.

We cannot but recall that one other legend of St. Peter's last scenes, the *Domine, quo vadis*. Many of my readers may have pondered it with emotion near its alleged place of occurrence, just outside Rome on the Appian Way. St. Ambrose gives it to us—at the distance of three centuries from St. Peter; but however uncertain in fact, it illustrates precious truths with pathetic power. The Apostle was condemned. The Roman Christians entreated and persuaded him to accept an opportunity of escape; an escape which was certainly no crime in itself. But the Lord's call to death and glory had now come at last; and at the gate of the City, in the gray morning, as the old man passed out, he met a Stranger passing in; and behold it was the Lord. "Lord, whither goest Thou?"—"I go to be crucified in thy place." Peter returned to his prison, and to the cross, and by his death glorified God.

"*They shall carry you where you would not.*" It is remarkable indeed, this solemn prophecy of suffering, so closely connected with the joy of love and restoration. In one way or another it will surely be thus with every true disciple of our beloved Saviour. To each of us without exception He will assign some cross to bear for Him; to each He will say, in one way or another, "If you love me, serve me; and you shall *suffer for me.*" Only, the suffering is the "accident," the joy the "substance." First the pardon, the love, the gladness; then the allotment of the cross which that deep joy will make so much better than bearable. Peter was not to be martyred that he might win the love of Christ, but because he had obtained it. The order is, indeed, "first cross, then crown." But the cross is preceded by the embrace of the eternal arms. *Crucem porta, te portabit*, is a beautiful motto; but let us not confuse its meaning. The cross we carry is our cross of trial, the cross where self is crucified. The cross which carries us is the Lord's cross of atonement, the cross of complete salvation. If in any sense our cross can be truly said to carry us, it can only be as it is a means to teach us how to realize better our repose on His.

So Peter received this solemn outline of his future. Strange privilege, to be permitted to know in advance just so much of "the unknown to-morrow"! Probably the whole meaning of the prediction was not at once clear to him, or to John. But

at once, surely, they recognised in it a prediction, distinct and supernatural, of long service closed by violent death. Such an expectation then Peter carried with him all his life, and close to the end he refers definitely to it (2 Pet. i. 14): "*Sudden is to be the putting off of my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ once shewed me.*" Yet we may be sure that this knowledge of his predestinated course and goal gave no unreality to his life, to his methods of work, to his precautions for safety, to his thoughts of death. Like many other Divine purposes, it was indicated just so far as to reveal the infallible purpose, and yet to leave the man as consciously free as ever step by step. God knows how to make His counsel work freely in absolute harmony with the creature's genuine agency.

The Lord had said, "*Follow me*" (*ἀκολουθεῖ μοι*), an exhortation which but for the context we might have thought to be general (for observe the *present* imperativē) and figurative. And so no doubt it was in great part. "If any man serve me, let him follow me"—let him live near me, watch my will and learn my way. But the utterance was, however, illustrated by an act. We gather that the Lord Jesus *moved*, walking away along the shore or towards the hill, and bade Peter literally follow Him. The command was not, so far as it appears, meant for the whole party. Only Peter is addressed, and Peter is surprised to see John following also. The whole incident must have been brief and symbolic. Let us translate the verses.

Verse 20: "*Peter turning round* (as he stepped forward after his Master, evidently, and heard steps behind him), *sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following, the disciple who also had leaned over at the supper to Him and said, Lord, who is Thy betrayer? Seeing him Peter says to Jesus, Lord, but what of him? Jesus says to him, If I choose that he remain till I come, how does it affect you? Do you follow me. So this report went out to the brethren, that that disciple is not to die. And yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, If I choose that he remain till I come, how does it affect you?*"

Verse 24: "*This is the disciple who witnesses about these things, and who wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.*"

Verse 25: "*Now there are many other things too which Jesus did, things which if they were written each in detail not even the world itself, I think, would have room for the books which would be writing.*"

One word, out of place, on the last two verses. Without any attempt at explicit critical discussion, I would only say that they seem to me to be written by St. John himself, not

added later by other hands. "We know" is a turn of expression quite in the Apostle's manner; he loves to put himself as it were aside; to speak as *ab extra* of himself. And surely, had the Ephesian Church thought it needful, or decorous, to add an *imprimatur* to an Apostle's writing, they would not have expressed themselves so simply. "*The disciple*" would scarcely have been in their view an adequate description for their blessed patriarch and guide, the personal friend of their Divine Redeemer. Moreover, they would hardly have added an attestation while John lived; and had they done so after his death, could they have left the mysterious words which had prompted the rumour of his immortality without some further comment?

As regards the hyperbole in which is conveyed the thought that to record all the Lord Jesus did would be "infinite"—the phrase is an hyperbole, no doubt. But if plainly intended to be so taken, it is perfectly veracious. It most manifestly is not a prosaic estimate of the area which the books would cover.

Far better than any lingering over such a verbal difficulty is an application to the heart of what the phrase imports. It tells us that such was the boundless wealth of the Lord's works of love and power that even the precious Gospel of St. John is but a brief selection, divinely ordered yet quite brief, from out of the wealth. Let us give thanks both for the wealth of the materials, and for the brevity of the record—a brevity so good for the busy and for the simple reader. Abundantly enough is written to serve the holy purpose of the writer—"that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we may have life in His name."

But now to return to the narrative of verses 20-22.

We have seen, early in our study, how the hearts of Peter and John had been drawn together. Together we find the two saints in their Passover-lodging, together at the tomb, together on the waters, together soon at the Beautiful Gate, together before the Council, together at Samaria. The last Gospel closes with this scene in which they follow their Lord together, yet in which their Lord reminds them how different at length their ways of following should be.

Peter, it would seem, had risen to follow, and then John, as he sat close to his earthly friend and to that heavenly Friend who bound them together, silently rose and followed too, while perhaps the other disciples as yet did not move. As always, John is not named; he is described as the loved disciple, and as the man who as he reclined at the supper leaned nearer to the Lord, and asked Him about the traitor. Why this last detail is introduced here it is not easy to say



Peter on that occasion had been the inquirer through John. So it *may* be that the event is here mentioned as an occasion on which they had acted together. Or is it simply that the incident was an example of the near intimacy between John and his beloved Master?

So Peter turns and sees John following. And now, full of the thought of the prediction of his own martyrdom, and instinctively connecting all that concerned himself with the concerns of his dear and ever dearer companion, he asks what *his* end shall be. *Ὅπως δὲ τί;* What should *he* do? Shall he also grow old, and then stretch out his hands, and be carried where he fain would not go? He is following Thee, and me, now with his steps. Shall he follow also in the manner of his life and of his death?

I need not dwell at length on the Lord's memorable answer. At first sight at least it reads very simply, as if just a grave and gentle correction of Peter's too anxious curiosity, or at most a gentle reminder that his truest peace would be found in following personally his Redeemer in the path chosen for *him*, leaving John's path to the same choice. There may undoubtedly be a deeper meaning. It may be that the "coming" of the Son of Man when the City, and Temple, and Ritual passed away—His mystical advent in judgment and mercy then—was intended. It is at least very probable that St. John was the only Apostle who survived the year 70, and that he survived it long, living far on into the new age of the Christian Church.

We must observe, however, that the first disciples plainly took the "till I come" to refer to the great literal Second Coming, the Era of immortality; for they reasoned from the words that John would not die; that he was to abide till the Lord came; therefore till the resurrection; therefore he would not sleep, but be changed. And the old Apostle, so it seems to me, corrects the error by calling attention to the emphatic "*if*" (*ἐάν*) of the sentence as the Lord spoke it, and to the "What is that to thee?"

Likely as we must feel it to be that these solemn final words of the last Gospel should have a deeper meaning than the literal, I cannot think that we can be certain that it is so. The great age reached by St. John before this record was written had very possibly given them an emphasis and mystery among "the brethren" which was beyond their first intention.

I love to think, though it may be too arbitrary a thought, that the Apostle here takes pains to correct any misconception, because, in part, of his own deep longing to be with the Lord. He would not linger on in an earthly immortality. He would thankfully pass through the gate of death, as Peter long

ago had done, as yet longer ago his Lord Himself had done, to be soon and for ever with Him where He is.

"*If I will.*" Let us close by an act of solemn attention to these words. Some time ago we observed how markedly, all through this chapter, Jesus speaks of and from Himself: "*Lovest thou me? Feed my flock: Follow me: Till I come: If I will.*"

Who is this who, if He speaks not blasphemy, speaks in His own right with the voice of God?

"*If I will.*" "My will is to rule your future, Peter, and John's future too." Those precious lives, those regenerated and inspired apostolic souls, were to accept the predestination of their time and their labour from the mere will of Jesus. There is no fear lest that will and His Father's should differ, should collide; yet none the less is His will *His will*. And that will disposes absolutely of Peter and of John. They love, adore, and follow. It ordains.

*He wills* that the one, the eager, the impetuous, but now wonderfully chastened, the man of strong act and word, should spend for Him many years of heavy labour and much suffering, and then die for Him in a death of extreme agony.

*He wills* that the other, the man of deep and silent spiritual life and thought, the character which we might perhaps have deemed to be "not long for this world," as the phrase is, should live on and on, working, suffering, thinking, writing, till every one of his comrades had fallen asleep, and should then die the death of all men.

The destiny of St. John may remind us how deeply hidden are the details of the Lord's plans for His servants; how impossible it is for us to forecast their future by temperament or circumstance. We know a friend born and made as for vigorous and sustained action. We know another of almost unearthly walk with God. But we know not which will be taken, and which left; or whether both will go early, or both very late. We have no hint whatever of the principles on which in these matters the Master acts. Certainly He is not capricious; but certainly also He has no such *need* of our character or labours as to allow the most laborious or the most successful Christian to say, "He cannot spare me yet."

But the great thing is to know, as we do know, that all shall be as "*I WILL.*" There is a Will, there is a Person, above and beneath all our lives and works; and that Will, that Person, is Jesus our Lord. He and not fate, He and not chance, He and not the processes of an impersonal universe, at this hour rules and ordains our path of service, present and future; yes, and the path too of those we love, and about whom we sometimes ask more wistfully than about ourselves, "*Lord, and what shall this man do?*" Let us calmly and most

thankfully recollect it. Bewildered souls try too often to find rest in absolute and abject deference to the will of a poor fallen, erring man. It is the distortion into woful error of a glorious and most healthful truth. It is true rest to yield ourselves and our dear ones in entire simplicity, without a struggle or reserve, to the living will of the Lord Jesus Christ; for that will is omniscient, and all-wise, and all-holy, and (let us dare to believe it now and every hour) it is a will of such love that it does not for a minute forget, in the light of the glory of God, the true interests and true joy of the feeblest and most halting of the disciples.

Then let us, not so much think about Him as go direct to Him, to learn the secret which made Peter and John quite happy in their several paths; happy to work together, happy to work asunder. Their secret was, "It is the Lord; Thou hast loved me; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

So the one lived on till he had written, "Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

So the other lived on, utterly alone at length in a new generation, a new world, but happy and sanctified to the end in the eternal truth, and able to write this about it: "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

H. C. G. MOULE.

P.S. 1.—I hope to be able, after a short interval, to offer to the reader a few similar "*Notes and Comments*" on John xx.

P.S. 2.—A friend has kindly written to me, questioning my view of the details of the incidents given in vers. 4-8. His view is that Peter and John were not in the larger boat, while the other five were in the smaller, but that all were in the larger when the Lord accosted them; that then Peter leapt out, and that the remaining six, after anchoring the larger boat, made for the shore in the smaller, trailing the net with them. I must confess that this view increasingly commends itself to me as I read the passage over.

H. C. G. M.

