

connexion the phrase is used of God Himself, e.g. 'I am thy God' (Genesis xvii, 1). In the New Testament it is used with what appears to be conscious reference to its Old Testament application to God. Thus in St John's Gospel Jesus uses it in connexion with various metaphors which He applies to Himself, 'I am the Bread of Life' (John vi, 35); 'I am the Light of the World' (John viii, 12). Christ seems here to be drawing attention to His Divinity. The phrase is also used, alone, in answer to questions. Thus e.g. in Mark xiv, 62 it seems to mean no more than simply 'Yes, I am'.

It is used absolutely in the Old Testament as a translation of the Hebrew phrase '*ani hu*', : I (am) He. It is the phrase which God uses to designate Himself in the prophetic and historical books, e.g. 'See that I am He, and that there is no God beside Me', (Deut. xxxii, 39). There are some passages in the New Testament where the phrase seems to be used thus; for example, 'I am (He), do not fear' (Mark vi, 50). It is possible that Jesus means only 'I am here'. But it seems more likely that He wants to convey the O.T. meaning of '*ani hu*'.

The most important text is that of John viii, 58, quoted above, where besides the separate 'I am' there is also the contrast between the verbs *become* (*γίνεσθαι*) and *be* (*εἶναι*). Jesus here is 'claiming for himself the timeless being of Deity, as distinct from the temporal existence of man', Bernard, *St John*, in loc. The phrase occurs again in this sense in viii, 24: 'Unless you believe that I am (He), you shall die in your sins'; and in xiii, 19: 'I tell you now, before it happens, so that, when it comes to pass, you may believe that I am (He)'. John xviii, 5 seems to be another example; Jesus says to his would-be captors 'I am (He)', and they go back and fall on the ground. It may be that Jesus is merely indicating that it is He whom they seek—and that their falling to the ground is to be ascribed to the overpowering effect of His personality and moral ascendancy. But perhaps the effect was accentuated by a claim to Divinity which they recognized to be such.

In conclusion, we may say that when our Lord uses the phrase of Himself absolutely it seems to refer in varying degrees of clarity and emphasis to the self-designation of God in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, and is thus a claim to Divinity on the part of Christ.

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*When and where did the Magi visit the Holy Family (Matthew ii, 1-12)?*

Herod was still on the throne. We know he died in April of 4 B.C. and that his last illness was at least of some months duration, of Josephus, *Antiq.* xvii, 6-8. He was apparently in sufficiently good health to suggest with plausibility that he should go and adore the new-born King of the Jews.

The visit of the Magi can therefore hardly be later than 5 B.C. How soon after Christ's birth did it take place? The three Wise Men came from the East ἐπὶ ἀνατολῶν. This is traditionally supposed to have been Persia. 'There is abundant evidence of a widespread desire and expectation of a coming Deliverer or Universal King sometime before the birth of Christ. Eastern astrologers would search the heavens for signs of this great event', Plummer, *St Matthew*, in loc. The name μάγος was used to designate the priests and wise men in Persia, and this might seem to point with probability to that country. But the word came to be applied to men who had no connexion with Persia. It came to mean wizard or magician. Lagrange maintains (*Comm. Mt*) that the 'East' from which they came was no further than Transjordan. This would naturally make a difference of many months in the time taken by the journey, but since we do not know when they started (before or after the birth of Jesus) it would not help us a great deal towards settling the time of the visit.

The text contains little indication. The use of the word παιδίον for Christ (ii, 8, 11) is not definite enough to go on. It could apply to any child up to seven years of age. The mention of a house (verse 11) has been taken by some to indicate an appreciable lapse of time—but surely the transfer could have taken place within a few days of birth? Indirectly one can show that the visit of the Magi must have occurred after the Presentation in the Temple, which took place, according to Law, forty days after birth. If the visit of the Magi had taken place before the Presentation, so also would the Flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents, because they followed at once on the visit (ii, 13). But it is incredible that the Holy Family should have returned to Jerusalem, within that short time, for the Presentation.

Moreover, 'if Christ was born not later than B.C. 6 as most people would admit, and the Holy Family remained in Egypt (Matthew ii, 19) until after the death of Herod in B.C. 4, this would at once exclude the possibility of putting these events before the Presentation', *SCRIPTURE* 1947, p. 44.

If it is fairly certain that the visit of the Magi took place not less than forty days after Christ's birth, it is quite a different matter to fix a limit at the other extreme. If we could determine the place the Magi came from and the time they started we should be approaching a solution. Even if we had some information about the identity of the star, we should still not know when it appeared (before or after Christ's birth) or whether the Magi started as soon as it did appear. (This is not the place to discuss the various identifications of the star with natural phenomena. On that, see *SCRIPTURE*, 1948, p. 51.) It is argued that Herod's command to kill all male children of two years old and under suggests that Jesus was at least a year old at the time. This conclusion does bear some degree of probability.

The place of the Magi's visit was of course Bethlehem (ii, 1) and it seems that the Holy Family had by then managed to move into a house (ii, 11). There is no need to discuss here the modern suggestion that Jesus was born, not in Bethlehem but in Nazareth. On this see *SCRIPTURE*, 1947, p. 79.

We are left then with the conclusion that the visit of the Magi took place after the Presentation, i.e. not less than forty days after Christ's birth and (in view of Herod's order to kill male children of two years and under) probably at least a year afterwards. The visit would not have taken place later than the end of B.C. 5 : i.e. before Herod's last illness. But exactly how old Jesus was then depends on the date assigned to his birth, on which, see *SCRIPTURE*, 1946, p. 77. R. C. FULLER.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Church in the Christian Roman Empire*, Volume I by J. R. Palanque, G. Bardy and P. de Labriolle, translated from the French by E. C. Messenger, Ph.D. Pp. xv, 408 (Burns Oates and Washbourne) 25s.

The seventy years covered by this half-volume of 'Fliche and Martin', the period which first moved Newman's noble pen to history, must strike a spark from the dullest student. The passage from the storms of persecution to the sunshine of imperial tolerance and favour, which, every qualification made, must have come with blinding suddenness; the almost immediate presence of new problems and dangers from the intervention in the things of God of a Cæsar preoccupied with unity and peace; the appearance of protagonists of giant stature and of a new subtlety and intensity in theological conflict—these are the materials of a great story, inherently dramatic. No need to ask 'shall these bones live?'—they will spring to life at a scholarly and sensitive touch.

In the volume before us the scholarship is there in wealth and maturity, but somehow the life never springs up in full vigour. The puff claims that the contributors 'continue a tradition of exact scholarship combined with easy narrative style', but it would require the largest goodwill to endorse this latter claim throughout the four hundred pages of the book.

How far dissatisfaction is traceable to the fact that we are reading a translation is not easy to determine. It does seem at times that the translator's very formidable task is weighing heavily. The version, though running smoothly has an unathletic feel which often verges on the flaccid.

J. R. Palanque's account of the edicts of toleration and the conversion of Constantine (it is well supplemented by de Labriolle at the beginning of his own chapter) gives the book a fair start. Here perhaps