

An effort, however, has of late been made to throw light upon these the most ancient remains on the western sea-board of Europe by careful and systematic examination. "Pictures and photographs of these half-ruined buildings," exclaims a living author devoted to the study of antiquities, "are of very little use unless accompanied by ground-plans; and even ground-plans are shorn of much of their value for scientific study without sections and levels. These have generally been absent; and hence conjectures and opinions which should have been swept away years ago continue to be advocated and asserted to be very probable, if not absolutely demonstrable and true. The time has arrived for a wider and more satisfactory inquiry respecting structures whose history the stones themselves, according to their disposition, may help to develop; for as no written chronicles, however ancient, throw any light upon them, the best and safest course to pursue is to investigate that history by a careful study of the monuments." What the final outcome of such study may be, the future alone can determine. Perhaps to many minds the fuller story of mediæval times will for the present prove the most attractive, because the frowning castles and the beauteous churches are so often connected with great and noble names, whose very personality it is easy to picture to the mind, and bring, as it were, within the range of actual sight. Any way, the borderland of Wales is brimful of real and living interests to all those who have eyes to see and ears to hear the soft music of the distant past.

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ART. V.—NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS NOT COMMEMORATED.—EPAPHRODITUS.

IT has been held by some that Epaphras of Colossæ and Epaphroditus of Philippi were in reality one and the same person. It is true that their names are identical, Epaphras being only a shortened form of Epaphroditus. But beyond this there is nothing whatever to support the conjecture. Indeed, probability lies altogether in the opposite direction. In each case, the bearer of the name is so intimately connected with the Church, so evidently belongs to the locality, with which the name is associated, that it seems impossible to believe that the same man could have had such close relations with two very different places; that he could, so to speak, have been indigenous to both. Whatever chronological order we adopt for the Epistles of the imprisonment, it requires stronger evidence than similarity or identity of name to establish the conclusion that one so entirely bound up, as we

have seen Epaphias to have been, with the Church at Colossæ paid another visit, within a comparatively short interval, to St. Paul at Rome, as the no less closely allied member and messenger of another and distant Church.

Regarding Epaphroditus, then, as distinct from Epaphras, all our knowledge of him is drawn from a short but deeply interesting passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, supplemented by a passing mention of him in the same Epistle.¹ From these we learn that the Christians at Philippi, between whom and St. Paul as their father in Christ² the most affectionate relations had always existed, had determined to make a collection among themselves, and send it for his relief and comfort in his imprisonment at Rome. In accordance with the custom of those primitive times the honourable and responsible office of conveying the gift—for the alms of the Church were a sacrifice to God³—must be bestowed upon one or more of its most distinguished members. Upon Epaphroditus, a minister⁴ of the Church at Philippi, and bound to it by the closest ties of mutual affection and regard, the choice fell. How willingly he accepted, how zealously he discharged the office, how true a representative he was of the Philippians, in the loving and assiduous service which he rendered on their behalf, we gather from the fact that his self-sacrificing exertions well-nigh cost him his own life. Whether from fatigue and exposure on the journey, or as a consequence of his unremitting attendance on the Apostle, under the trying circumstances of his imprisonment, and perhaps at an unhealthy season of the year at Rome, he was laid prostrate by grievous sickness.⁵ So grievous was it that he was “nigh unto death.”⁶ But the mercy of God spared St. Paul the added sorrow of his loss, and restored him to health and usefulness. Now, however, a new anxiety bore heavily on Epaphroditus. It had come to his knowledge that intelligence of his sickness had reached Philippi. With what sorrow and anxiety the news would be received there he well knew. To remove that sorrow and anxiety by visiting them in person and giving them visible proof of his recovery, was now the great

¹ Phil. ii. 25-30 ; iv. 18.

² Acts xvi. 11-40.

³ Phil. iv. 18. Comp. Acts xi. 29, 30 ; and 2 Cor. viii. 16-23, where (verse 23), as here (ii. 25), the messenger is called *ἀπόστολος*.

⁴ *συνεργός* (Phil. ii. 25).

⁵ There is no reason to suppose that directly ministerial work at Rome had anything to do with this sickness. The “work of Christ,” which occasioned it, is defined by St. Paul to have been the effort “to supply that which was lacking”—*i.e.*, personal ministrations to himself on the part of the Philippians (ii. 30). How truly that was “work of Christ” we know (Matt. xxv. 36).

⁶ *παραλήσιον θανάτῳ* (ii. 27).

desire of his heart. And St. Paul, with characteristic unselfishness, recognised in the wants and wishes of others the necessity¹ of surrendering the friend whose continued ministry he might well have desired for himself.² He sent him back to them "more diligently,"³ with more readiness and promptitude, than he would have done if this illness had not befallen him, and found an alleviation of the sorrow of his own imprisonment, in sympathizing with them in the joy which his return to them in health would, he knew, occasion them. He counsels them not only to give him a glad Christian welcome, but to accord to him special honour, because he had earned for himself a place among the heroes of the Cross, by hazarding life itself for the cause of Christ.

The history thus briefly sketched discloses to us the fact that as we owe the Epistle to the Colossians, with its treasures of Christian doctrine, to the anxiety of Epaphras for the welfare of his converts, so are we indebted to the mission of Epaphroditus for another canonical Epistle, which is a graceful mirror of the beautiful and touching relations between a Christian pastor and his flock. The fact is in itself suggestive. It bears witness to what may be called the human side of inspiration. Not only when serious dangers threatened the Churches of Galatia, or grave evils called for correction in the Church at Corinth, but when lighter interchanges of affection and regard passed between St. Paul and the Church at Philippi, the Divine *afflatus* was vouchsafed, and another jewel added to the treasure-house of the universal Church. And it reminds us also of the truth, which it is one main object of these papers to illustrate, that "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary;"⁴ that in no age have the great benefactors of the Church really served her single-handed, but by a manifold and complicated agency, in which the most prominent is not always the most important factor.

But beyond this, some points of special interest are raised by the history of Epaphroditus.

I. We learn from it that St. Paul did sometimes accept the offerings of his brethren. Elsewhere he refers to such offerings only at once to assert his right to them, and his fixed determination to forego that right.⁵ Here we gather that to this loved and favoured Church he did not scruple to be in that sense a debtor. And it is not the bare fact that is here conveyed to us.⁶ How rich is the setting in which it reaches us! How great would have been the Church's loss if the

¹ ἀναγκαῖον ἡγησάμην (ii. 25).

² σπουδαιότερος, verse 28.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 7-13. Comp. 1 Thess. ii. 9.

² Comp. Philem. 13.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 22.

⁶ As it is in 2 Cor. xi. 8.

mission of Epaphroditus had never occurred to call forth the noble passage in which it is alluded to!¹ Those offerings—not money only, but, as we may well believe, more personal gifts prepared by loving hands to minister to his comfort²—awaken grateful memories of like kind offices in the past. Ten years before, when he left them after his first memorable visit to Philippi, their care for him had borne fruit in material supplies, sent after him as he pursued his missionary career. The tree that had borne such fair fruit was not dead, but winter had intervened; with the return of spring³ it burst forth into new life. The opportunity, which alone was needed, had arisen, and they “revived their thought of him.” Gladly now, as gladly before,⁴ he welcomed their love and accepted their offerings. Yet, though grateful for them, he is not dependent on them. He has been initiated into the Christian mystery of self-sufficingness,⁵ which is indeed the mystery of sufficiency in Another.⁶ Sincerely as he values it, it is not “the gift” for himself that he values, but “the fruit” to their account which that tree of natural affection, grafted as it has been with the tree of Christ’s everlasting love, has in its revival produced. The fragrant incense of their gift would rise to heaven, to swell the great cloud which from age to age had ascended thither, called forth and accepted by the animating virtue and pervading worthiness of the one great Offering, offered once for all to God for “an odour of a sweet smell.”⁷

¹ Philip. iv. 10-20.

² τὰ παρ’ ὑμῶν, “the things that came from you,” verse 18. Warm clothing, as I am glad to find Bengel also suggests (“Miserant numos, aut vestes et quæ inservire possent”), and as we may well suppose, when we remember his touching request for his cloak before the coming winter in his later imprisonment at Rome (2 Tim. iv. 13-21).

³ Bengel thinks that the season of the year at which the gift was sent suggested the metaphor: “Videtur legatio a Philippensibus tempore verno constituta, a quo metaphora sumitur. In hiemem quadrat illud, carebatis opportunitate.”

⁴ “The object of this allusion (verse 15) seems to be not so much to stimulate them by recalling their former zeal in contributing to his needs as to show his willingness to receive such contributions at their hands. ‘Do not mistake my meaning,’ he seems to say. ‘Do not imagine that I receive your gifts coldly, that I consider them intrusive. You yourselves will recollect that, though it was my rule not to receive such contributions, I made an exception in your case.’”—Bishop Lightfoot.

⁵ αὐτάρκης εἶναι—μεμύημαι.

⁶ πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με, verse 13.

⁷ The expression here used, ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας (verse 18) has an interesting history. It first occurs (Heb. עֲשֵׂה לְךָ עֹלֹת עֹשֶׂה עֹלֹת : LXX. ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας) of Noah’s sacrifice, when he came forth out of the ark (Gen. viii. 21). It is afterwards frequently applied to the Levitical sacrifices (e.g. Lev. ii. 12; xxvi. 31; Ezek. xx. 41); and then St. Paul, in the New Testament, claims it both for the sacrifices of Christians here and for the one sacrifice of Christ (Ephes. v. 2), through which both they and the typical sacrifices of the old covenant were acceptable to God.

And, in acknowledgment of it, He to Whom in the person of His minister it had been offered would pour down upon the offerers a supply for "every need, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

II. Nor is the light thrown by this history upon the exercise of miraculous powers by the Apostles without its value. In the case of Epaphroditus, as afterwards in that of Trophimus,¹ no recourse was had, nor is there any intimation that it was ever contemplated, to the gift of healing which St. Paul undoubtedly possessed. To prayer and to such medical aid as was in their reach they doubtless betook themselves. The miraculous gift was not, we may conclude, at the absolute disposal of those who possessed it. We know that its exercise depended on the faith of the person to be healed.² It would seem to have depended also, as did the exercise of the gift of prophecy,³ on the immediate action of the Divine Spirit on the possessor of the gift. Christ Himself on earth, though One with God in purpose and in power, subordinated in the working of miracles His human will and affections to the plan ordained for Him, and worked such works only as His Father had given Him to do.⁴ To His disciples the purpose was revealed and the power delegated only, it would seem, as the occasion arose. They could not heal when and whom they would. And thus their sympathy is preserved to us unimpaired, if, indeed, the proximity of miraculous aid, possible and yet withheld, does not strengthen it by intensifying the trial of their faith. The sick chamber of Epaphroditus differed in no material respect from that of a Christian now. The growing sickness, the deepening anxiety, the ebbing life, the agonizing suspense, the favourable turn, the reviving hope, the happy recovery, the joyful thanksgiving—all these things were then as, by the help and comfort of such examples, they have been since, and shall be in Christian homes and chambers to the end of time. The "powers of the world to come," whether as they then visited the earth in miraculous form, or as they dwell permanently in the Church in the spiritual life and hope of Christians, do not annihilate, though they do renew and ennoble the nature of man. Joy and sorrow, health and sickness, life and death, are still the same, while yet they are changed wholly to the followers of Jesus. He who "desires

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 20.

² Acts xiv. 9. The same searching look, "fastening his eyes upon him" (*ἀρᾶνισας*), is ascribed to St. Peter when he healed the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; and it may have had the same object—viz., in the exercise of the gift of discerning of spirits, to ascertain whether he had faith to be healed.

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 30.

⁴ John v. 36; xiv. 10, 11, 31.

to depart and be with Christ," because "it is very far better,"¹ may yet, without inconsistency, in the naturalness of grace, acknowledge gratefully the mercy of God to them both in sparing to him the friend who "was sick nigh unto death."

III. And once again, we learn from the history of Epaphroditus that the service of Christ, so far from discouraging and repressing, affords the highest scope, accords the highest honour, to all that is noblest in the nature of man—to self-denying service and self-sacrificing devotion. "Hazarding his life," "having gambled with his life,"² so St. Paul writes of him. And what is his comment upon it? Zeal without discretion? Want of Christian prudence? Well-intentioned, but ill-advised? A warning to himself and you? Oh no! "Hold such in honour." Recognise in him the type of those to whom the Church accords the highest consideration. She, too, has her heroes. She, too, knows of risk, and hazard, and venturesomeness, which she admires and rewards. Where should true heroism flourish if not beneath the shadow of the Cross? Who should be ready to hazard life itself, and to count honourable the risk, if not he who has to say "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"?

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NOTE.—Since the above article was written the attention of the writer has been directed to a recent work, entitled "Lectures chiefly Expository on St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians," by John Hutchinson, D.D., Bonnington, Edinburgh (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 38, George Street). He is glad to find in those parts of it which refer to Epaphroditus, much to confirm the view which he has taken. Thus, for example, Dr. Hutchinson writes of St. Paul's joy at the recovery of Epaphroditus: "The Apostle is no iron-bound Stoic. His is a heart of flesh. Ruskin has well said, 'I find this more and more every day: an infinitude of tenderness is the chief gift and inheritance of all the truly great men.' Judged by such a test, Paul is foremost among the greatest." And again: "Epaphroditus, almost unknown as he is, thus stands forth in the volume of the book as a noble instance of ardent, bold, self-forgetful, unwearied service—service rendered to an Apostle, and rewarded, as all such service is, by the Apostle's Lord." The book is thoughtful and scholarly, and will repay perusal.

Redenhall Rectory, Jan. 17.

¹ Philip. i. 23.

² The reading *παραβουλευσάμενος*, "hazarding," or "being venturesome with" ("formed from the adjective *παραβολος*, venturesome, like *περπερεύεσθαι*, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, from *πέρπερος*."—Ellicott), is now generally adopted. It is better supported than the reading of the A.V. *παραβουλευσάμενος*, "having consulted amiss," and is more in accordance with St. Paul's vigorous style.