

ART. V.—NOTES AND COMMENTS ON ST. JOHN XX.

MANY years ago—it was in 1869—I received a kind letter from the late Lord Chancellor Hatherley (Sir W. Page Wood). I had been much helped in thought and faith by his small but valuable book—as well worthy attentive study now as ever—“The Continuity of Scripture,” and I ventured to thank him. His reply contained the following sentences :

“I thought that many young and ardent minds become embroiled in controversy before they have had the thought or inclination to make *proof* of Scripture by its effects on their own hearts when read with a simple, prayerful wish to believe. In my youth (I cannot express the benefit thus derived from Holy Writ) I used, when under trial, to read, say, two or three chapters of the New Testament, specially the closing chapters of the Gospel of St. John, and never found my doubts so cleared as by that expedient. I have now for more than thirty years perused the whole Volume yearly. I fear I may not have time now allowed me to expose the very shallow reasoning powers of very eminent German scholars. Their learning I admire ; but at the bar we often find a man’s logic swamped by his learning ; and so it is in divinity.”

I quote these words of that good man and great judge—perhaps as great a master of legal evidence as there has ever been—to introduce the following simple paper on these same last pages of St. John, and more particularly on the precious narratives of chapter xx. As with a previous series in the CHURCHMAN (on chapter xxi.), so with this—the object is not criticism specially, nor speculation, but reverent verbal study, carried on “with the simple, prayerful wish to” realize, and so the more gladly to “believe.” Whatever such studies do, or fail to do, may they lead us a little nearer to Him who is the Life and the Light—Jesus Christ, our sacrifice, our hiding-place, our resting-place ; our strength for watching and for work ; our panacea for all temptation ; our resurrection ; our heaven in prospect !

We begin with a translation :

“Now on the first day of the week Mary of Magdala comes early, while it was still dusk, to the tomb, and sees the stone taken out of the tomb. So she runs and comes to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and says to them, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have put Him. So they went out, Peter and the other disciple, and set out for (ἤρχοντο) the tomb. So they were running (ἔτρεχον), the two together ;

and now the other disciple ran forward (προέδραμε), quicker than Peter, and came first to the tomb; and, stooping from the side, he sees lying the linen cloths. He did not go in, however. So Simon Peter comes, following him, and went into the tomb, and views (θεωρεῖ) the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that was over His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but apart, rolled up and put in a separate place. So the other disciple, who came first to the tomb, then went in, and he saw, and believed. For not as yet did they know the Scripture, that of necessity He would rise from the dead."

Verse 1. Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ ("Now on the first day"). We observe the connecting "now," δὲ. It points to previous details, and reminds us that the Resurrection is indissolubly linked, in significance as in fact, to what precedes—the Cross. It is the two which make the one glory of the work of Christ. It is "the Living One who became dead" (Rev. i. 18) who is our Peace, and can lay His hand on us and say, "Fear not."

So this brief particle leads us back, over some forty hours, to that mid-afternoon of the Friday when the Lord expired; to the short interval before sunset, when Joseph and Nicodemus had buried Him in the adjoining garden, watched, perhaps from under the city wall,¹ by some of the Galilean women; then to the hushed interval of that sunset, and evening, and night, and following day. That interval the disciples spent in grief and tears, and apparently in different places, isolated into groups. For Peter and John, having with them no doubt the Lord's Mother, seem to have been found apart from the rest when Mary Magdalene sought them; and Thomas was definitely withdrawn; and the women, again, appear to have set out, on the Sunday morning, from different points. Then we are led to the evening of our Saturday—the close of their Sabbath—when, as the sun set, the women, or some of them, at once set out to buy and to prepare the odours with which to complete the work of Nicodemus. So we reach the middle of that night, and the breaking of the first-day morning, when from their various lodging-places the women came—Mary of Magdala, Mary "of Joseph," Salome, and perhaps others too.

As we review that interval, I would touch on one point only in the picture of the disciples drawn for us in the Gospel

¹ I venture to assume the rightness of "General Gordon's site" of the crucifixion, outside the Damascus Gate. Near that "green hill," I am told, there is still a sort of garden in a rocky nook, and two handsome graves are to be traced within its small limits. If Gordon is right, the only question about those graves (for there is no appearance of other gardens, or place for them, near) will be—Out of which did the Lord Jesus come in resurrection?

narrative; I mean the collocation and contrast, so startling yet so deeply truth-like, between the total failure of their faith and the survival of their love.

When the Lord rose, perhaps no living person, excepting (surely) His Mother, consciously and intelligently "believed on His name." No living person, except her, trusted His promise to rise again, and understood His death in the light of it, resting the soul upon His sacrifice. So this very passage tells us, in regard of no less personages than John and Peter. But such a statement would have been the very last thing which a fabricator would have excogitated, and the very last which would have arisen unconsciously in minds (such as many "critics" assume all the minds of the primeval Church to have been) pregnant with legend, or facile vehicles for the growth of myths. Who in that simple age, with its literary "helplessness," would have thought of *constructing* an utter collapse of faith in the central circle of the disciples just when Jesus was accomplishing His alleged victory—just *because of* the Cross, which so soon somehow became the hope and glory of His followers?

But knowledge and reflection *now* show us how true to history, to time, and conditions, and the human soul, all this picture is. All the prepossessions of those men and women, and their cherished wishes, lay in the direction of a triumph not through death at all. The attention they ought to have given to their Master's words about His death had been all the while distracted and neutralized by these intense expectations and preferences. When the stern fact of the crucifixion came, their confidence was not only surprised, but crushed; and so it would have remained if Jesus had not risen again.

And yet—they loved Him. They must have been tortured with worse than doubts about His Messianic character, if, indeed, in those distressing hours they had mental leisure to *doubt* amidst their absorbing *grief*. But *some* formidable questionings, not only about Him, but about all they had known or hoped about God, must have mingled with their tears. And yet—they loved Him. Women, Apostles, all, in one degree or another, they loved Him still. And in this, too, there is a deep and verifiable truth of the human heart. Mere grief and alarm may easily be imagined over the unlooked-for death of any strong leader. But the leader these persons had lost was JESUS—the Man JESUS, such as the Gospels draw Him. Such a chief, even had He misled them in the end must still (it is true in the logic of the heart, which alone is in question here), be loved, for the time, with an intensity only the greater for His fall. Take the case of Magdalene. Jesus, contrary to her dearest longings and most confident expecta-

tions, had died :—what could she believe? But Jesus, whatever else had happened, had liberated her from awful physical and mental suffering (Mark xvi. 9) :—how could she not love?

May I draw a somewhat evident lesson? Let us give continual thanks for the broad, strong foundations of fact and reason, of cogent and manifold proof, which lie beneath the assertion of the Creed, that He who died for our sins rose again the third day. History has nothing else in it so firm and solid, in the historical sense, as that position. But the human mind is a strange and subtle thing, and it is possible that we may, in certain states of it, find ourselves doubting, as it were, against our reason; seeing the steps and links, but so as to fail to combine them at the moment into a result of conscious and invigorating certainty. Then let us be thankful indeed if we bear about in us another part of the vast evidence of Christianity—that is, of Jesus Christ; the thing which kept the adherence of those disciples tenacious when for a dark season their full faith was gone. This Jesus Christ has, somehow, touched, and changed, and set free my soul, my being. He, and only He—His name, His person—has had a power over me which is like nothing else. The more I have seen, trusted, loved Him, the more always I have stood clear of sin, of self. I cannot but love Him still. And as for these haunting doubts, I will at least drag them into the light of His love, and look at them there. If I feel for a sad moment, “They have taken away my Lord,” I will at that very moment remember why, among other reasons, I can call Him “my Lord” at all; He, or if not He, then nothing, has freed me from many more than seven sins. Is not doubt about such a power a self-detected fallacy already?

But, on the other side, we must not press too far the resemblance between Mary’s case and our own. What was, after all, this passionate love of the disciples when their faith was gone? In a great measure, it was only passionate. It was affection for a being whom they had (on their then hypothesis, Luke xxiv. 21) much mistaken; affection for someone who, if the faith had been “vain,” was less than the Son of God; affection, indeed, for Jesus of Nazareth, but for a Jesus infinitely short of His reality—a dead, a vanished, a disappointed Friend.

So, warm as it was, that love could not well have persisted. As time went on it must have been infected with the bitterness of an ever-growing pain at the loss, the blank, the *mis-take*. Many of the company would be tempted to forget Him, if they could. Some would have come to dread, perhaps even to hate, the spectre of His memory. Those who still loved would love on, not in joy and strength, but in gloom. It was the

love more of nature than of grace—let us not fear to say it—which brought Mary to the tomb. The heavenly love—the joyful, holy, undecaying love—was yet to come: love stirred from its depths by light and power Divine. But in order to this she had yet to know Jesus as the Risen One, who was dead, but is alive for evermore.

As such we know Him, and have felt His power.

Let us stand by the side of Mary of Magdala, with that knowledge and consciousness in our grateful hearts. Let us look into that tomb, and see it full of light—the seat of angels, the gate of heaven. Let us turn round with her, and see the reason of it all—the Lord Jesus risen indeed; Jesus calling us by name, while we answer, *Rabboni*—my Master, O my Master!

H. C. G. MOULE.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW.—The Rev. R. W. Kennion (Rector of Acle) writes to us: "The readers of THE CHURCHMAN have reason to thank Prebendary Leathes for many of his contributions; and not least now for his article on 'Extreme Criticism.' But I hope he will forgive me for doubting whether in one sentence (p. 3) he has not conceded too much to the 'critics.' He says: 'We mainly receive the Old on the authority of the New.' In many important ways the converse is equally true. For we could hardly accept the New if the Old had not prepared for it. As a genuine history, the Old is confirmed by many infallible proofs: from Egypt, from Nineveh, from Babylon, from the past history and present condition alike of the land and the people. In the Mosaic institutions, and in the continual dealings of God's providence, as recorded in the Psalms and the Prophets, we have, as in an architect's plans of a house which he intends to build, the clear delineation of that grand scheme of salvation which was to be revealed, but which no human imagination could have conceived—no human power accomplished! And the result of the whole is that the more closely we study and compare the Old and the New together, the more we are astonished at the correspondence of the two in an almost infinite number of particulars. And we have this wonderful confirmation of our Faith, that the O.T. has all along been in the custody of the unbelieving Jews; so that none can say that it has been tampered with by Christians."

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Notes on Bible Words.

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No. XIV.—"KEPT" (*guarded and preserved*).

THE ignoring the difference in the two words of our Lord, John xvii. 12, "I kept . . . I kept," is perhaps, even now, not uncommon. The A.V. runs thus: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept."

The first "kept" is *ἐτήρουν*, and the second *ἐφύλαξα*; and while