

wide house and large chambers, and cieled it with cedar and painted it with vermilion,” were but as the decking of the harlot’s face and the furnishing of her table (comp. Jer. xxii. 14, 15, and Ezek. xxiii. 40, 41). And, therefore, for her there must be also the harlot’s doom. Aholah and Aholibah, Samaria and Judah, must bear the recompense of their lewdness and the sins of their idols.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

“ABOUT MY FATHER’S BUSINESS.”

A PLEA FOR A REJECTED TRANSLATION.

LUKE II. 49.

THE set of modern critical opinion seems to favour the rendering of the above clause adopted by the late Revisers of the New Testament: “*In my Father’s house*,” in preference to the old reading of the Authorized Version: “*About my Father’s business*”; which latter form is admitted to be no less “*linguistically correct*” than the former.¹ And plausible reasons are alleged for this preference. It is proposed in the following pages to offer some considerations which appear to the writer to invalidate the force of those reasons, and to establish the claim of the Authorized Version to be retained.

It has been implied that, grammatically, there is nothing to choose between the two translations. The grounds, therefore, for adopting the one rather than the other must be sought in the context, and in the circumstances attending, or supposed to attend, the utterance of the words.

From the context it is argued in favour of the modern rendering, that the force and meaning of our Lord’s previous question: *τί ὄτι ἐζητεῖτέ με*, depends upon his assump-

¹ Meyer’s *Commentary on Luke*, in loc.

tion that Joseph and Mary had known (*οὐκ ᾔδειτε*;) the *locality* where He must be; in a place, that is, where assuredly no anxious *search* would have been needed to find Him; whereas it is plain that their knowledge of his being engaged "in his Father's business" would not necessarily have facilitated their search for Him.

On the other hand it is contended that, in the enquiry, "Why did ye seek me?" (A. V. "How is it that ye sought me?") the *question* may be, not of the reason of the *uncertainty* which made a doubtful search necessary (in which case the emphasis would be on the word "*seek*"); but of the *motive* which had prompted them to institute a search at all, since they must have known that his necessary occupation required his freedom of action apart from their control; (and in this case the "*why*" would bear the emphasis of the question). The writer, with some hesitation, submits that this latter emphasis is somewhat favoured by the original form of the expression. According to this view, our Lord is represented as intending to convey to his parents, that there had really been no occasion for their surprise at his absence from their company on their homeward journey, nor for their return to Jerusalem to seek Him, since they knew, or ought to have remembered, that He *must be* occupied in his Father's affairs, and that these were sufficient to account for, and to justify, his absence from them under any circumstances.

It may, moreover, be reasonably questioned if there were any grounds on which our Lord could have assumed his parents' knowledge that He *must be* in his Father's house. They are, indeed, described as not having understood (*οὐ συνήκαν*) "the saying which he spake unto them." But if it was merely to a knowledge that He must be in the Temple that He appealed, it is plain that, although they might not have been conscious of such a knowledge, there could hardly have been room for their not understanding

what He meant by the question. Pointed as it was by his actual presence in the Temple before them, if this were really what the question meant, what could have been the *ῥῆμα* in it which was unintelligible to them?

The form, "about my Father's business," may, it is true, seem to be open to a similar objection in this respect; viz. that there appear to be no grounds for our Lord's assumption of his parents' knowledge that He must be thus occupied. Of this, however, something will be said hereafter. But the expression itself, so understood, must have conveyed to Joseph and Mary a very vague and indeterminate idea, not easily to be identified with the actual circumstances in which they had found Him. It might well be that, to their very dim and shadowy apprehensions concerning Him, his presence in the Temple among the Jewish Doctors would suggest absolutely nothing of a clue to the meaning of his words. And on this interpretation, therefore, the *οὐ συνῆκαν* would be as natural, as it appears exaggerated on the other.

In the recorded circumstances attending the utterance of these words are found suggestions, which seem even less favourable than the above to the Revisers' interpretation, in comparison of the Authorized Version. For instance, the necessity of our Lord being in his Father's house could hardly have been intended to be pleaded by Him as absolutely regulating all his movements, and determining where He should be found, seeing that He had scarcely uttered the words in question, before He withdrew Himself with his parents from that house, and spent the next eighteen years substantially away from it! This consideration seems almost ludicrously adverse to the new translation. On the other hand, the claim to be engaged in his Father's concerns had doubtless frequently been alleged both explicitly and implicitly in respect of the occupations of his previous home life, and continued to

be so during the subsequent period of his eighteen years' subjection to the parental rule; his acknowledgment of that claim being in no wise intermitted by his withdrawal with his parents from his Father's *house*.

Intimations of a more general kind seem to the writer easily capable of being read between the lines of the inspired narrative which increase the probability that the Authorized translation, rather than the rendering of the Revisers, expresses the meaning of the Evangelist.

It is disappointing that there is absolutely no trustworthy record of the first thirty years of our Lord's personal history, except of the event before us. But although the wisdom of this silence is in some degree appreciated, and altogether acquiesced in, the question often obtrudes itself why this particular event should have been selected for narration; more especially as, in the way in which it is generally understood, it has apparently very little direct bearing either on the previous or subsequent life of our Lord. It seems to stand absolutely alone as an isolated event. And, moreover, a vague feeling of dissatisfaction, however conscientiously subdued, is apt to arise in the minds of many readers, at what may be called the moral character of the episode. In plain terms, the ordinary acceptance of the story makes it difficult to recognize the dutifulness or the consideration of our Lord's conduct, when we remember his youthfulness and his acknowledged relation to Joseph and Mary. The words of the Gospel look as if the writer felt that our Lord's subjection to the parental control had been interrupted by this event, when he intimates that on his return to Nazareth with his parents He was subject to them (*ὑποτασσόμενος αὐτοῖς*). And if nothing can be alleged to account for this interruption other than a passing interest in the Temple at Jerusalem, it seems scarcely justifiable in One who claimed to be perfect in every relation of life. It is usual, therefore, to avoid laying much stress on the moral

character of this event. But the absolute feeling in respect of the circumstances may be tested by the enquiry: How is our Lord's conduct in this case, thus apprehended, to be represented as exemplary to our children?

This difficulty, where it is felt, appears to the writer to be due to the misapprehension which conceives of this event as having neither cause nor consequence in the recorded narrative of our Lord's history. Thus conceived, it appears natural to enquire why it was introduced. It is contended that the event is really neither unconnected, nor is narrated merely to emphasize the first formal appearance of Jesus for a moment upon the stage of history. Nevertheless, in order to its right understanding, something more than is actually told needs to be supplied, although a thoughtful reader pressed with its difficulty can hardly fail to gather what is lacking from the words themselves, or from a consideration of what must have previously transpired in the home of Jesus. And if this be deprecated as speculation merely, it is thought and claimed that, when an hypothesis is commonly reasonable and probable in itself, and serves effectually to harmonize and explain recorded facts which without it cannot be duly organized, it is both admissible and justifiable.

Our Lord had arrived at the age of twelve years. And although we are absolutely without information as to the details of those twelve years in his life, we cannot help feeling assured that such an abnormal experience as his was not undergone in the lowly home at Nazareth without giving rise, among the other members of that home, to countless doubts, perplexities, disputes, and jealousies. The notices of our Lord's brethren which appear in the Gospel narratives do not represent them as being at all in sympathy with his Divine claims (John vii. 5); or as likely to have conceded much to Him in their domestic relations. On this there is no occasion to dwell. A perfect life could not have

been lived among imperfect beings without provoking misunderstanding, and probably ill-will. The Divine marvel of which we are undoubtedly assured is, that such a perfect life was lived untouched by sin, amid all the wayward influences that surrounded it. But notwithstanding all that had transpired in her own experience, we find that even our Lord's mother failed to appreciate or to realize its perfection and its peculiarity. As a consequence of this failure on her part especially, it would be thought necessary at the beginning of his twelfth year, according to Jewish usage, to decide upon our Lord's future career, by adopting for Him a vocation,—a trade. And this question of a pursuit would be freely discussed in the family, when the views expressed concerning Himself, and the necessity of making provision for his future livelihood, however kindly intensioned, could not but be repugnant to our Lord; and, if called on to consider them, his replies would be such as they could not understand, and would not accept as satisfactory. All this may, it seems, be so far taken for granted under the circumstances as to be dealt with as fact. The desire of Joseph and Mary would be that Jesus should be taught by Joseph, the trade of a carpenter, which he himself followed. When this was commended to Jesus, how would He receive the proposal? It is surely something more than conjecture which gathers from the inspired narrative before us that He met it with an intimation, only vaguely intelligible to his mother, that He must be *about his Father's business*, and that his needful devotion to this must limit, if not wholly prevent, his taking a son's place in Joseph's workshop. It may be readily imagined that Mary, unconvinced by what she did not understand, would continue to urge upon Him his duty to his father Joseph, as a reason for complying with the Jewish usage. And that his reply would tenderly remind her of what she no doubt had told Him, although the distance of time

seems to have affected it with some unreality in her own perceptions,—that Joseph was not actually his father;—and of his divine paternity and its claims upon his acknowledgment.

The memory of such conversations with his mother before they had left Nazareth would entitle Him to expect that when she complained, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?” she would understand his plea of devotion to his divine Father’s affairs. Had it not been so, the “Wist ye not?” would have been unmeaning and out of place, as in reality it appears on any theory, if our Lord were intending to plead the necessity for being in his Father’s *house*.

Whether our Lord eventually yielded to the pressure of this assumed urgency, we have again no information. It does not appear that Mark vi. 3 is absolutely decisive on this point. Nor is it necessary for the argument before us that it should be decided. It is sufficient for the contention of the writer, that the question must inevitably have been debated in the household of Nazareth; whether Jesus was to pursue his lonely way of study, and prayer, and converse with God, in view of the lofty mission to which He considered Himself bound, and the destiny laid upon Him by his Father in heaven; or whether He was to accept the normal rôle of the young Israelite, and take his place of labour and subordination among the ordinary members of the family. There is no irreverence in the assumption that the question must have presented a real difficulty to the dawning consciousness of the youthful Messiah; and that his way was only cleared to solve it after meditation and prayer; while we know that his reasons for hesitation would neither be intelligible nor appreciable to Mary, still less to Joseph. And, therefore, it is something more than probable that impatience may have marked their treatment of what they so little understood.

It will naturally be objected that the practice of training every youth, whoever he might be, to some handicraft, was so universal among the Jews, that no question could arise in such a matter but the selection of a craft; and then everything would follow as a matter of routine. But this objection does not take into account the altogether exceptional consciousness of Jesus, and the undoubted fact that such an employment as was proposed to Him would seem to render almost impossible the seclusion necessary to that Divine training to which He felt called to submit Himself. And be it observed that all that is contended for is that the difficulty strongly presented itself to his mind; while it is not asserted that it compelled a final refusal. The objection above alleged does indeed heighten our appreciation of the wonder, and opposition, and utter want of sympathy, with which our Lord's resistance would be met by the rest of his family.

It was then, according to our view, while this point was still in debate, that the time came for his first visit to Jerusalem, with all the stimulus to be afforded by its novel and solemn sights and sounds to the divine instincts of the young Devotee, quickening his heavenly sympathies and deepening his assured sense of his heavenly Father's mission, and of its apparent incompatibility with the earthly career sought to be imposed upon Him. And the effect of his new experience seems to have been a more intense conviction of the necessity for asserting his divine independence of human control, so far at least as that control might limit his power of obedience to his Father's claims. At this critical point in his experience, He must once for all in some way clear and secure a free course for his spiritual growth, free from even the most sacred human interference. And, doubtless, the felt necessity prompted Him to a proceeding which, if it had been merely arbitrary or accidental, would indeed seem somewhat harsh and difficult

to justify. His purpose, therefore, was to convey to his mother, in the gentlest form, an intimation, and even a rebuke, which on a later occasion needed to be more stringently repeated in the words, "Woman, what have I to do with Thee?"¹ In order to carry out this purpose, He seems to have purposely invited the reproach of his mother for his apparent indifference to their anxiety respecting Him; so that He might more effectually convince her that such anxieties were something more than superfluous, seeing that in many respects his way could no longer be theirs, and that henceforth the interests of his heavenly Father must supersede, whenever they should conflict with, the claims of his earthly parentage. Assuming the need of such a lesson, could it have been more kindly, more tenderly, nay, even more dutifully, enforced?

It was then, evidently, not a consideration of the claims of his Father's *house*, but of those of his Father's *mission* which had determined his conduct and justified his words. And his growing conviction that the interests of that mission were at stake, were liable still further to be endangered, and must now be maintained, even although a duty of great, but inferior, obligation had to be foregone in order to maintain them, may fully explain a course of action which a mere love for, and interest in, the Temple, however legitimate, would scarcely seem sufficient to account for.

Doubtless, although Joseph and Mary failed to understand the full significance of his words, Mary at least had sympathies and memories which quickened her instincts to recognize their purpose. Probably it was not the first time, as assuredly it was not the last, when it was needful for that loving and dutiful Son to appeal to her *memories* in bar of her maternal claims. His appeal on the present occasion was at once admitted. Nothing more was said.

¹ John ii. 4.

With some wonder and perplexity, but in silence, the tender reproof was received; and the place of duty and subjection, within the needful limits imposed by his higher obligations, was re-assumed. This momentary but necessary insubordination cleared his way to pursue his course of unobtrusive obedience at home, without further interference with his preparation for the work which his Father had given Him to do. And thus, during the following eighteen years, He trod, apparently with no interruption, the secluded paths of communion with God; while we are told that his mother "kept all these sayings in her heart."

It has been noticed above that the Gospels make no definite statement of our Lord's having followed Joseph's occupation of a carpenter; for the outcry of a multitude (Mark vi. 3), can hardly be taken as decisive of the question. Nothing is more usual than that a popular clamour should link any reproach supposed to attach to the vocation of a father to the name of a son. And it surely seems strange, that if our Lord had practised the craft for eighteen years there should not have been found in his recorded sayings and discourses, by way of figure, parable, or allusion, some passing reference to his experience. Undoubtedly, that our Lord actually worked at the carpenter's bench is a most attractive theory; so attractive as to justify some hesitation in adopting it without sufficient grounds. But, after all, it is really more important to identify the early life of Jesus with the experience of a humanity disciplined by contradiction and trial, than with any particular form of its labour and patience. A lofty and peculiar destiny such as that of Jesus may well be supposed to have required, if we may so say, a broader and less mechanical training than was consistent with the life of a working carpenter.

But it is not essential to insist upon this. Supposing our Lord, according to popular tradition, to have learned from

Joseph his trade, and to have worked with him at the carpenter's bench, it may still be true that the event recorded by St. Luke must have impressed its intended lesson, and secured for the youthful Messiah all the independence of thought and action, all the liberty of seclusion and solitude, which He found to be essential for his preparation. It is, undoubtedly, possible that the necessity which required Him to be about his Father's *business*, may not have prevented his labour in the workshop; although that labour would certainly have been incompatible with his being in his Father's *house*. It is hardly necessary to point out that the *business* of his Father involved his laying Himself fully open to every divine or human influence which could aid in the preparation for his mission.

If it should be objected to what has been above written, that the reference back to unrecorded scenes of our Lord's home life to explain his words on this occasion, is speculative and presumptuous, the objector is asked: How else are they to be explained, consistently with what we are assured of the perfection of our Lord's character? Nay, how else are they to be explained at all? His question "Wist ye not"? not doubtfully implies some previous train of circumstances such as has been above formulated. It is evident that his obligation to be engaged in his Father's business is not now pleaded for the first time; and the attitude of Joseph and Mary on the *present* occasion proves how little they had received his words on *previous* ones. Our knowledge of the ordinary conditions of Jewish family life, or indeed of any family life, needs not the aid of *invention* to fill up the details of the picture that has been drawn. And the writer believes that all that has been suggested may, as he has said, with no great difficulty be read between the lines of the Evangelist's narrative, without travelling beyond the limits of legitimate historical construction.

And it is certainly in favour of such a view that, thus understood, the account of our Lord's first visit to Jerusalem takes a significant and defined place in the record of his life. It is not a mere accidental accretion, but an organized member of it, having a distinct relation to the general development of his personal experience, as He grew "in wisdom and age and in favour with God and man." This one event diffuses a light over the thirty years' silence of our Lord's private history, whereby we may see to gather up all that is desirable for us to know of the spirit which animated Him, of the discipline which He underwent, of the way in which, even in the sanctuary of the domestic affections, He had to endure the "contradiction of sinners against Himself."¹ We learn from it how, in the retired household of Nazareth, He was being prepared for the coarser misunderstandings and jealousies which attended his public ministry. And, above all, the above view of the Gospel narrative, if it may be allowed to have any verisimilitude, claims consideration, if only on the ground, that it leaves our Lord's conduct, in this case as in every other, open to the most microscopic criticism, and absolutely unclouded by any shadow of real undutifulness, or of indifference to the anxieties of those whom He loved.

ROBT. E. WALLIS.

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY:

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN.

ISAIAH XXVI. 19.

I. IT is a standing puzzle to students of the Bible why a doctrine which we hold to be so essential to Religion as the hope of Immortality is either not taught at all in the Old

¹ Heb. xii. 3.