

open to him. The inference appears to me necessary that his procedure was such as I have contended; and First Peter implies that such procedure continued for some years, and that it extended over the eastern provinces.

It has been shown how short was the time during which further developments of Nero's procedure could have taken place. It began in the summer or early autumn of 64 A.D., and in the latter part of 66 Nero left Rome for Greece, and evidently let the government drift. Had he gone on and taken the step, easy indeed in itself, towards the final stage of treating the Christian name as in itself illegal, it would have been this final stage that spread to the provinces. But if Nero did not make the step before he left Rome, there is no room for any further step till the wars of the succession ended, and Vespasian was seated on the throne.

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(*To be continued.*)

ON THE PROPER RENDERING OF ΕΚΑΘΙΣΕΝ IN  
ST. JOHN XIX. 13.

BOTH in the Authorised and Revised English Versions of the New Testament, the verb *ἐκάθισεν* is here taken in a neuter or intransitive sense, and is rendered "sat down." The word is thus made to refer to Pilate himself, and implies that the Roman governor then took his place on the tribunal, as being, at the time, under Cæsar, the supreme ruler among the Jews. Luther, in his translation of the passage, goes so far as to insert the word "sich," *seated himself*, "setzte sich," and in so doing, as we shall see, he has been followed by almost all his learned countrymen down to the present day. But for acting thus, there is really no warrant in the original. The verb stands by itself in the Greek without an object; and, if anything is

to be understood at all, it seems to me quite as legitimate to supply *αὐτόν* as *αὐτόν*, *him*, referring to a different person from the subject of the verb, and not *himself*, which, of course, points to Pilate. The meaning will then be, not that the Roman procurator personally assumed the place of judgment, but that he "seated" Jesus on the tribunal, while he thus emphatically presented by deed, as he had already done by word, the innocent and uncomplaining Sufferer to the exasperated Jews in the character of their "king."

I venture to think that this latter view brings out the real force of the passage. All will probably admit that it appears at once much more in accordance with the strikingly dramatic narrative in which the verse occurs, than is the translation of *ἐκάθισεν* that has been commonly adopted. To be told that Pilate himself "sat down on the judgment-seat" is a merely prosaic and commonplace statement, which implies no more than what might have been witnessed any day in Jerusalem; but to be informed that he brought forth Jesus from the Prætorium, and placed *Him* in the seat of authority and honour, at once calls up before us a picture, which by its unexpectedness, and yet its fitness, has the very strongest power to impress our hearts.

But, of course, the decisive question is,—Will the word *ἐκάθισεν* bear this meaning? We have, in fact, to enquire whether the verb *καθίζω* can mean "to set down," as well as "to sit down"; and, more particularly, whether there is any other example in the New Testament of its being used absolutely in the transitive sense which I claim for it in this passage. We look then, first, at the classical writers, and what do we find? Why, there crowd upon us passages which prove that the active or transitive sense may really be regarded as the ordinary or normal meaning of the word. Thus, to quote only two out of a multitude

of passages, we find the following in Homer (*Il.*, vi. 359, 360) :—

Τὴν δ' ἡμίβητ' ἔπειτα μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἔκτωρ,  
Μὴ με κάθεζ' Ἑλένη, φιλέουσα περ' οὐδέ με πείσεις—

“But helmet-tossing Hector the mighty then answered her (saying): Do not *constrain me to sit*, Helen, loving though you be, for you will not persuade me (to do so):<sup>1</sup> and in Xenophon (*Anab.*, ii. 1, 4)—Ἐπαγγελόμεθα δὲ Ἀριαίῳ, εἰ ἐνθάδε ἔλθῃ, εἰς τὸν θρόνον τὸν βασιλείον καθίσει αὐτόν—“And we promise to Ariæus, that, if he will come hither, we will *seat him* on the royal throne.” The classical usage of the word is thus obvious; and we next proceed to enquire whether a like transitive meaning is found attached to καθίζω in the New Testament. Here again the answer is clear that such is indeed the case. We turn to 1 Corinthians vi. 4, and there read—Βιωτικά μὲν οὖν κριτήρια εἰς ἔχῃτε, τοὺς ἐξουθενημένους ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, τοὺτους καθίζετε—“If then ye have to judge things pertaining to this life, *set them* to judge who are least esteemed in the church.” Still more apt for our present purpose is Ephesians i. 20, because in it ἐκάθισεν occurs absolutely in a transitive sense, as I claim it should be taken in the passage under consideration. The words of St. Paul are—ἦν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις—“which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and *set Him* (or, *made Him to sit*) at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” Here, as all agree, the words καὶ ἐκάθισεν (or, according to a different reading, καθίσας, accepted by some with, however, exactly the same meaning) must be translated transitively, “caused Him to sit,” or “set Him down” at His own right hand. And why

<sup>1</sup> The quotations in Greek and Latin are translated throughout for the sake of English readers who may wish to follow the argument.

should not the same rendering be given to the words as they occur in St. John's Gospel? It is to be observed how naturally the transitive meaning of ἐκάθισεν here fits the context. Pilate is represented in the first clause of the verse as *doing something* to Jesus. "He brought Jesus forth," we read, and the action thus begun is naturally conceived of as continued in the following clause, "and set Him down." The object of the governor's action having already been emphatically pointed out in the accusative τὸν Ἰησοῦν after ἤγαγεν, there was no necessity for following ἐκάθισεν by αὐτὸν, but the mind of the reader spontaneously suggests that supplement as implied in the preceding accusative. And thus the action which is represented as begun in ἤγαγεν, naturally finds continuance in ἐκάθισεν, so that the two clauses harmoniously read: "Pilate brought Jesus forth, and set Him down on the judgment-seat."

I confess that it seems to me not a little remarkable that this admirably coherent rendering of the verse has met with so little favour among interpreters of the New Testament. The translation of ἐκάθισεν for which I am pleading has not a place even on the margin of the Revised Version. And this is all the more to be wondered at, because every one who has paid attention to its marginal renderings must have felt how liberally (to use very mild language) alternative translations are presented. But it must be admitted that the Revised Version in thus virtually denying that the transitive force of ἐκάθισεν is here conceivable, stands in full accord with the course adopted by the vast majority of New Testament critics. I have looked into most of the recent Commentaries on St. John's Gospel both by German and English scholars, and I find that almost all of them agree in ignoring that rendering of ἐκάθισεν which I have proposed. They do not argue against it: they simply pass it by as unworthy of notice. Thus Meyer contents himself

with adopting Luther's rendering "seated himself," without the slightest reference to any other possible version. The same course is followed by Weiss, Lange, Luthardt, Lücke, Holtzmann, Schantz, Keil, and others. In our own country, Ellicott's Commentary implies the common rendering, and suggests no thought of any other being possible. The same is true of the *Commentary on St. John* published under the editorship of Dr. Schaff. Dean Alford says not a word upon the subject, and has simply on his margin opposite the word *ἐκάθισεν* the following very weak remark: "intr. Matt. v. 1, al.," implying, of course, that he here regarded the verb as neuter, while he does not even refer to those passages in the New Testament in which, as he himself allows, the word has, of necessity, a transitive significance.

The only recent critical work which, so far as known to me, notices and discusses that alternative rendering of *ἐκάθισεν*, for which I contend, is what is known as *The Speaker's Commentary*. I shall here quote the annotation in full, and then briefly deal with the objections it brings forward to the interpretation proposed. The note is as follows: "It has been suggested that the verb (*ἐκάθισεν*) is transitive (1 Cor. vi. 4; Eph. i. 20), and that the sense is, 'Pilate placed Him (Christ) on a seat,' completing in this way the scene of the 'Ecce Homo,' by showing the King on His throne. At first sight the interpretation is attractive, but the action does not seem to fall in with the position of a Roman governor, and the usage of the phrase elsewhere (Acts xii. 21, xxv. 6, 17) appears to be decisive against it. St. John, it may be added, never uses the verb transitively."

This writer, it will be observed, admits the "attractiveness" of that view of the passage which I am endeavouring to substantiate. He would, apparently, be glad to accept it, were there not certain objections to which he thinks it

is exposed. Let us look, for a little, at these, and see what weight can properly be assigned them.

The first objection is, that "the action does not seem to fall in with the position of a Roman governor." The difficulty thus suggested is somewhat vague; and we cannot readily grasp what it is meant to imply. Probably, we are to understand by it that it would have been inconsistent with the dignity of Pilate that another should, for a time, occupy the place and wear the insignia of office, while he himself stood near, undistinguished by the outward marks of that authority which he possessed. If this be the drift of the objection, it is obviously of a somewhat shadowy nature, and does, in fact, rest upon a total misconception of the national character of the Romans. They cared little *who* might be adorned with the external emblems of power, provided they themselves enjoyed the reality. There is a remarkable passage in Tacitus, which brings this point very strikingly before us. Referring to the anxiety which was shown by the Parthians, that Tiridates, while in fact a prisoner, should be treated with all the outward honours due to a prince, the historian remarks (*Ann.* xv. 31): "Scilicet externæ superbæ sueto, non inerat notitia nostri, apud quos vis imperii valet, inania transmittuntur." "In truth, the Parthian king, accustomed to foreign pompousness, was ignorant of our habits, who attach importance to the realities of power, while its outward show is left to others." So, on this occasion, Pilate, like a true Roman, might readily dispense with the mere *inania* of authority—the place, the robe, and other externals of supreme power—knowing that all the time he retained the supremacy in his own hands, and might give proof of it when and how he pleased.

Secondly, it is said that "the usage of the phrase elsewhere appears to be decisive against" its transitive use in this passage. Acts xii. 21, xxv. 6, 17, are referred to, and

undoubtedly καθίζω has, in these and other passages, a neuter sense, and is to be rendered "to sit down." But, as we have already seen, it has as certainly at 1 Corinthians vi. 4 and Ephesians i. 20, a transitive force, so that nothing can be inferred from its meaning in other places as to its import in the passage before us. The truth is, καθίζω is one of those verbs, not uncommon in all languages, the special signification of which can only be determined by a consideration of the context in which they are found. Take *e.g.* *insideo* in Latin, and we find Cicero using it in a neuter sense when he says (*De Oratore*, ii. 28): "Nihil quisquam unquam, me audiente, egit orator, quod non in memoria mea penitus insederit"—"No orator ever did anything in my hearing which did not firmly *sink into* my memory." But again, Livy uses the same word with an active meaning when he says (xxi. 54): "Mago locum monstrabit, quem insideatis"—"Mago will point out to you the place which you are to *occupy*." Or, take the verb *settle* in English—that, too, may have either a transitive or intransitive meaning, according to the connexion in which it occurs. Thus, when Dean Swift says, "It will settle the wavering, and confirm the doubtful," the word is evidently active; whereas, when Lord Bacon says, "The wind came about, and settled in the west," the sense of the word is as clearly neuter. Nothing, then, but the context can determine the meaning which is to be assigned to such words in any language.

Thirdly, it is objected that "St. John never uses the verb (καθίζω) transitively." Here, the question naturally suggests itself—How often does he use the verb at all? And the answer is—Only *twice* (viii. 2, xii. 14) besides the instance under consideration. Now, the inference is plainly very precarious that, because St. John uses καθίζω twice in a neuter sense, he did not, on a third occasion, attach to it a transitive meaning. This may be illustrated

both from Latin and English. Virgil, *e.g.*, uses the verb *ardeo* many times in the course of his poems in a neuter sense, but none the less certainly does he give it once, and perhaps only once, a transitive meaning, when he says (*Ecl.*, ii. 1), "Corydon *ardebat Alexin.*" Again, the verb "to fade" has almost always a neuter sense in English. With this common meaning it may be found not unfrequently in the writings of Coleridge. But, nevertheless, he uses it once at least with a transitive force when he says—

" Ere sin could blight, or sorrow *fade*,  
 Death came with friendly care;  
 The opening bud to heaven conveyed,  
 And bade it blossom there."

It would then, we see, be totally erroneous to conclude that because the verb *ardeo* almost always occurs in Virgil with a neuter meaning, he can *never* use it with a transitive force; and because the verb *to fade* has almost invariably a neuter sense in English, it does not admit, on any occasion, of an active signification. So in the case before us. It would be utterly unwarrantable and illogical to infer that, because St. John uses the verb *καθίζω* on two occasions intransitively, he may not, on a third occasion, use it with that transitive force which it unquestionably bears in other parts of the New Testament. And thus, I trust, all the objections which have been brought against its being so used in the passage before us have been fairly and adequately answered.

But we have now to enquire whether any sanction can be found in primitive times for the meaning which I have attached to *ἐκάθισεν* in this passage. We look first into the most ancient versions—the Syriac Peschito, and the Latin Vulgate. Now, here it must be admitted that the Peschito renders the Greek by a verb which means "sit," and not "set," thus supporting the intransitive sense.



But I am afraid that, by its inconsistency, the Syriac here deprives itself of all weight in settling the question. Thus, at Acts ii. 30, where the same tense of the verb καθίζω occurs, the Greek being καθίσαι ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ, the Peschito uses the Aphel of the Syriac verb "to sit," and thus imparts to the original a transitive sense. All that can be said, therefore, is that the old Syriac translator preferred, as the great majority of modern interpreters have done, to give a neuter meaning to the verb in St. John, while, by attaching a causative sense to the same verb in the Acts, he tacitly admits that it might also have an active meaning assigned to it in the passage before us. The Latin Vulgate, again, can have still less weight ascribed to it. We, no doubt, find in it the rendering *sedit* in St. John, but we also find the rendering *sedere* in the Acts, which is, as all acknowledge, an obvious error. As, therefore, the Vulgate has mistranslated καθίσαι in Acts ii. 30, so it may also have misinterpreted ἐκάθισεν in St. John, and no importance can be attached to its authority either on the one side or the other.

But, happily, we can appeal to a witness more primitive than even the oldest versions as to the meaning which was assigned to our verb ἐκάθισεν in the early church. As is now generally known, some fragments of the Apocryphal Gospel according to Peter have recently been discovered. This work is unanimously dated by scholars (so far as opinion has hitherto been expressed) in one of the early decades of the second century.<sup>1</sup> Now, in the very interesting

<sup>1</sup> The above was in print before I had seen an able paper in *The Month* for January, 1893, by Mr. Lucas, in which he says:—"When Mr. Robinson (one of the two learned editors of the Cambridge edition of the Gospel) writes that "we need not be surprised if further evidence should tend to place this Gospel nearer to the beginning than to the middle of the second century," we feel constrained to express our dissent, and our conviction that further evidence, should it ever be forthcoming, will compel us to assign the Petrine fragment to some date intermediate between A.D. 150 and A.D. 175." But, as Mr. Lucas believes that "the use of the four Gospels side by side in the Petrine Gospel

account which the recovered portion contains of our Lord's Passion, the following words occur: *καὶ ἐκάθισαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ καθέδραν κρίσεως λέγοντες δικαίως, Κρίνε, βασιλεῦ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ*—"And they placed Him upon the seat of judgment, saying rightfully, Judge, O king of Israel." These words clearly contain a reminiscence of the passage in St. John's Gospel we have been considering, and they show us how the expression *ἐκάθισεν* was understood by the early Christians. Manifestly, it had a transitive meaning assigned it, and was regarded as denoting that Christ was actually set upon the tribunal of judgment. There is a somewhat similar passage in Justin Martyr's first *Apology*, which seems to suggest the same idea, and was probably derived from the so-called "Gospel of Peter." It stands thus (*Apol.*, i. 35): *καὶ γάρ, ὡς εἶπεν ὁ προφήτης, διασύροντες αὐτὸν ἐκάθισαν ἐπὶ βήματος, καὶ εἶπον, Κρίνον ἡμῖν*—"For, as said the prophet, in mockery they set Him upon the judgment-seat, and exclaimed, Judge for us." In this passage there seems to be a reference to Isaiah lviii. 2, where in the Septuagint we find the words—*αἰτοῦσι με νῦν κρίσιν δικαίαν*—"they now ask of me righteous judgment." But whether or not that is the passage of the Old Testament alluded to by Justin, his words obviously blend the phraseology of the Canonical Gospel of St. John with that of the Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter. It is to be observed that Justin uses *βήματος* with St. John, instead of *καθέδραν* which is found in the spurious *Evangelium Petri*, while he agrees with the latter in stating that Christ was, in reality, placed upon the seat of judgment, thus again suggesting to us what was regarded as the import of St. John's *ἐκάθισεν* by the primitive Church.

Let us now see, in conclusion, how the transitive meaning suggested by a previous Harmony," we are thus carried back by it to an earlier date, and learn from it, indirectly at least, the view of the meaning of *ἐκάθισεν* which prevailed in the primitive Church.

ing which has, I trust, been vindicated for St. John's *ἐκάθισεν*, fits in with the whole narrative in which the expression occurs (chap. xix. 1-15). "Then Pilate therefore," we read, "took Jesus"—led Him into the Prætorium—"and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they arrayed Him in a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews, and they smote Him with their hands." There can be no doubt that, in acting thus, the soldiers reflected those antagonistic feelings which were then at work in the heart of Pilate. On the one hand, he was evidently, to a large extent, impressed with the claims of Jesus, and hence those emblems of pseudo-royalty which he now permitted to be offered Him. On the other hand, he was afraid of being accused of disloyalty to Cæsar, if he too decidedly espoused the cause of Christ, and therefore he did not interpose to prevent that violent treatment of Him by the soldiers. In this wretchedly divided state of feeling, Pilate would fain have got rid of the case of Christ altogether. Accordingly we read (*vv.* 4-7) that "Pilate went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him out to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." A new element of disturbance was now introduced into the already distracted soul of the governor. Besides the personal respect he felt for Jesus, and the political terrors which prevented him from allowing that respect to lead to its proper result, there had now been started by the Jews a mysterious theological question which the Roman

governor felt himself utterly incompetent to face. He will, however, make yet another effort to free himself from his difficulties, and to escape from those dangers which seemed on every side to gather round him. So we next read (vv. 8-12)—“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and he went into the Prætorium again”—evidently taking the accused with him—“and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me? knowest Thou not that I have power to release Thee, and have power to crucify Thee? Jesus answered him, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin. From that time Pilate sought to release Him; but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.” There is much in these verses which might worthily engage our attention, were we at present attempting an exegesis of the whole passage. But what alone we have to deal with in the investigation we have been pursuing, is the effect which seems to have been produced on the mind of the governor. Personally well-meaning as he was towards Christ, and more and more impressed, as would appear, with a sense of His supernatural character, Pilate was, at the same time, weak and irresolute when he thought of the charges which might be brought against him before the cruel and jealous emperor Tiberius. Naturally, therefore, he felt strongly incensed against those Jews who had driven him into a position of so great difficulty. And he will, of course, retaliate upon them as much as he can. One way of doing this is by continuing to represent Jesus as their king, and by conferring on Him some appearance of that authority and honour which, as such, He should possess. Pilate, therefore, resolves to place Jesus for a time in the

seat of dignity, and to mortify the Jews by bidding them look to Him thus displayed as their true Sovereign. He had thus the satisfaction of at once acting upon the struggling convictions of his own heart, and of galling his Jewish adversaries to the uttermost. Thus, then, we read (*vv.* 13-15)—“When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and *set Him down* in the judgment-seat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the Preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour; and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!” The whole narrative is strikingly dramatic; and it is evident, I think, that the rendering of *ἐκάθισεν* which I have sought to establish coheres with it in that respect far more admirably than that usually preferred. It is, indeed, a most vivid and impressive touch which is given to the Evangelist’s account, when we regard him as telling us of Pilate, not that he himself sat down on the judgment-seat, but that he set Jesus there, and then called upon the furious Jews to recognise and do homage to their King. They, we are told (*vv.* 15, 16), “cried out,” in their rage, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him.” Pilate then, still adding fuel to their wrath, exclaimed, “Shall I crucify your King?” And then these recreant children of Abraham sink into the lowest depths of voluntary degradation, when, abandoning alike all national pride and all Messianic hope, they turn away from that meek Sufferer who has so often sought to win them to Himself, and rend the air with that fearful cry—the death-knell of all that was noble in Judaism—“*We have no king but Cæsar.*”

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