

deeper, more serene, more beautiful than any which earth heard from his lip—utterances which, after all, would be but the developed results of that inspiration which moved in the earthly ministry, and which death simply freed from all earthly restraints? May not such a greeting have been part of the master's own reward?

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*A NOTE ON ST. JOHN VII. 52. A PROPHET
OR THE PROPHET.*

WHEN the Revised Version of the New Testament was first issued, one of the passages, to which scholars must have turned with eagerness, was the verse which forms the subject of this note, and which, as rendered by the Authorised Version and interpreted by a catena of commentators, had long been an acknowledged difficulty.

But the Revised Version afforded no help, and even in one respect seems to have still further obscured what appears to the writer of this paper to be the true meaning of the words.

In the original edition of 1611 the Authorised Version renders the second clause of the verse in question: "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet."¹ In the Revised Version the same words are rendered: "Search and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." *Marg.*, "see, for out of Galilee," etc.

The one divergence between the two versions which bears on the present inquiry is the spelling of the word Prophet with a capital initial in the version of 1611 as

¹ So Mr. Waller, Assistant Secretary to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, kindly informs me. It is so printed in the Cambridge Parallel N.T., but with a small initial "p" in the Cambridge Paragraph Bible.

distinct from the small "p" of the R.V., an indication that the reference is not to the Messiah Prophet of Deuteronomy xviii. 15-19 but to any prophet in general. And it must be admitted that the Revised Version is supported in this interpretation by a long line of commentators.

St. Cyril, cited in Cramer's *Catena*, merely points out the inconsequence of the Pharisees' reply to Nicodemus, who had not himself raised the question whether Jesus were the Christ, or the Prophet, but only asked: "Doth our law judge a man except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?"¹ This is a true remark, and shews that it was not the actual question of Nicodemus, but his supposed concession to the popular surmising expressed in v. 40—"This is of a truth the Prophet"—that roused the indignation of the Pharisees. No note is added on any further difficulty in the verse.

Poole in his synopsis of interpretation writes on the passage: "We must take the words to refer not to one prophet in particular but to any. What the Pharisees assert is that no Galilean has ever been gifted with the prophetic spirit"; and again, "They infer the present from the past,"² i.e. because no prophet hath arisen, therefore no prophet shall arise. The instances of Nahum and Jonah are then cited in refutation of the statement that no prophet hath arisen out of Galilee.

Other Commentators follow to the same effect. Maldonatus, for instance, a Roman Catholic writer, uses almost the same language as the Protestant interpreters quoted

¹ τί γὰρ εἶπεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος; ὅτι προφήτης ἐστίν; εἶπεν ὅτι ἄκριτον ἀναιρεθῆνα οὐ δεῖ. Cramer's *Catena*, *ad loc.*

² *Quod Propheta nullus.* Non de uno sed de quovis Propheta accipe . . . nullus aiunt Galilæus unquam a Deo donatus est spiritu prophetico . . . colligunt ex præteritis præsentia. *Poli Synopsis ad loc.* In spite of these remarks the Greek text cited by Poole has ὁ προφήτης, a reading justified indeed by no authority, and yet pointing to the interpretation upheld in this note.

in *Poli Synopsis*. "From past example they make conjecture as to the future, not only that the Christ or Messiah, but that not even any prophet could come from Galilee. They argue, No Galilean has been a prophet, Jesus is a Galilean, therefore He is not a prophet."¹

Bengel ignores the difficulty. In more modern times Wordsworth,² after noting the fact that Jonah and Nahum, and perhaps Elijah, were Galilean prophets, adds: "So they prove themselves ignorant of their own history while they condemn Christ." Alford² says *προφήτης* cannot mean *the* Prophet or the Messiah. It was not historically true; for two prophets at least had arisen from Galilee, Jonah of Gath-hepher and the greatest of the prophets, Elijah of Thisbe, and perhaps also Nahum and Hoshea. Godet has a note to the same effect. Westcott³ paraphrases, "Galilee is not the true country of the prophets; we cannot look then for Messiah to come thence. The words have that semblance of general truth which makes them quite natural in this connexion, though Jonah, Hoshea, Nahum, and perhaps Elijah, Elisha and Amos were of Galilee." Archdeacon Watkins⁴ writes: "Their generalization includes an historical error which cannot be explained away. . . . The Sanhedrin, in their zeal to press their foregone conclusion that Jesus is not a prophet, are not bound to strict accuracy," etc. The last Commentator whom we shall cite is Dr. Plummer,⁵ who says: "Either their temper makes them forgetful or in the heat of controversy they prefer a sweeping statement to a qualified one. . . . Any-

¹ Ex præteritis enim exemplis de futuro conjecturam faciunt, non solum Christum Messiam, sed ne prophetam quidem esse posse, cum Galilæus sit; quasi argumententur: Nullus unquam ex Galilæa propheta extitit; ergo iste, qui Galilæus est, propheta non est. Ineptum prorsus argumenti genus. Maldonatus, *ad loc.*

² Greek Test., *ad loc.*

³ *Speaker's Commentary.*

⁴ St. John in Ellicott's *Commentary for English Readers.*

⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools.*

how their statement is only a very natural exaggeration. Judging from the past Galilee was not very likely to produce a prophet much less the Messiah."

What strikes one in reviewing this remarkable consensus of interpretation is, that, except St. Cyril, not one of the Commentators notes the important fact that the words of the Pharisees are not a direct reply to Nicodemus. The reference in their answer is to what was no doubt in the mind of Nicodemus, and the "officers" (v. 45) and of the people generally (v. 40).

The question had not arisen whether Jesus was *a* prophet, but a far more awful and important one, whether He was *the* Prophet or Messiah (v. 40, and comp. chap. i. 20, 25).

All the remarks therefore about the Galilean prophets, Jonah, Nahum, Hoshea, are beside the mark. Each Commentator has seen in turn that if the reference is to these it was absolutely unhistorical, and absolutely futile as an argument. For even if no prophet had arisen out of Galilee how could it be adduced that it should be so in the future?¹ It was false history and bad logic; and it is difficult to believe that even in the heat of disputation these learned members of the Sanhedrin should have thrown out such an ill-founded and foolish argument to a well instructed Rabbi like Nicodemus. They could not have been so ignorant of their own history as Dr. Wordsworth would have us believe, nor so illogical as Maldonatus represents them to be; nor, with Dr. Plummer, can we consider it "a very natural exaggeration." We agree with Archdeacon Watkins that if the Pharisees meant what they are interpreted to mean "their generalization includes an historical error which cannot be explained away." The fact is that the interpreters have failed through not considering the passage as a whole. The key

¹ Potest Deus præter consuetum morem agere. *Poli Synopsis, ad loc.*

to the explanation of *v.* 52 lies in its close connexion with *v.* 40. There we read: "Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, said, This is of a truth the prophet; others then said, This is the Christ."

The prophet and the Christ are here equivalent terms. In popular expectation they stood on the same level. And in Acts iii. 22 St. Peter clearly identifies the Christ with the Prophet. Comp. also St. John i. 20, 25, where the Prophet is distinguished from Elias, who was also expected, but only as a forerunner of the Messiah.¹

Some among the multitude, instructed probably by the Pharisees, set themselves to refute these thoughts and surmisings, and first they addressed the unlearned multitude, "the people of the earth," and, by what seemed to them a crushing argument, showed the impossibility of Jesus being the Christ: "What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

The scene is then changed. The officers commissioned to apprehend Jesus return to the Pharisees without their prisoner. They excuse their failure by saying, "Never man so spake." Never, that is, was there prophet like this. This time the rulers try the plan of "employing authority to stifle truth." "Hath any of the rulers believed on Him, or of the Pharisees?" adding: "This

¹ For the Rabbinical teaching about the prophetic side of the Messiah's work see Schöttgen, *Hor. Hebr.*, ii. 664 foll. *Messiam esse Prophetam clarissimum est. Quamvis enim nomen Propheta ipsi in scriptis Judæorum non sæpe tribuitur, tamen res ipsa ab iisdem docetur, Messiam scilicet doctorem esse et Pastorem qui ea quæ divinitus acceperat populum docuit totamque Dei voluntatem nobis revelavit.* It is noticeable that the false Messiah, Theudas, claimed to be a (or the) prophet (*προφήτης ἔλεγεν εἶναι*, Joseph. *Ant.* xx. 5, 1). So also the Egyptian named Acts xxi. 38 (*προφήτης εἶναι λέγων*, Joseph. *Ant.* xx. 8-6). It was a title familiar enough to attract attention and to stir enthusiasm.

multitude which knoweth not the law are accursed." Then a more formidable questioner comes forward not to oppose, but to urge the claims of reason—"Doth our law judge a man except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?" As we have seen, the form of the question is quite ignored, but the underlying thought of it is angrily refuted—"Search, and see that out of Galilee Prophet ariseth not." Now the only prophet to whom the Pharisees could possibly allude must be the Prophet of popular expectation named in *v.* 40, together with the Christ suggested by the excuse of "the officers" and involved in the question of Nicodemus. The only objection that can be taken to this is a grammatical one founded on the absence of the article before *προφήτης*.

We believe, however, that this absence may be justified (*a*) on general grammatical principles, and (*b*) still more convincingly by Greek Testament usage in the case of *χριστός* and *ὁ χριστός* which we have shown to be synonymous with *προφήτης* and *ὁ προφήτης*.

(*a*) First, then, the article is omitted with proper names, or with names which have come to be used as proper names, such as "father," "mother," "king," especially the Persian King (*βασιλεύς*), *υἱός*, *παῖδες*, *θεός*, *ἄνθρωπος* (Jelf, § 447, obs. 1; Clyde, p. 11 § 5, obs. 2 and 3). Under this rule would come *χριστός* and *κύριος*. In 1 Cor. xv. 58 *κύριος* occurs first with, and then without the article (Clyde, *loc. cit.*).

The article, again, is omitted before nouns denoting objects of which there is only one in existence, as *ἥλιος* (sun), *γῆ* (earth). It is omitted before *πόλις*, *ἄστν*, *ἄγρος*, where the context leaves no room for doubt as to the particular town, field, etc., intended (Winer, 148). Also when the word is sufficiently definite by itself from familiar reference, so that it does not need the article (Thompson, *Greek Syntax*, p. 31), somewhat in the same way as is

done by the Greek orators as to the name of the adversary in a lawsuit (Blass, § 46, 10, 11).

All these seem to be more or less analogous cases as to the omission of the article before *προφήτης*, a name that had so completely established itself in Messianic language as to have become a quasi-proper name. The form of the sentence (*v.* 52 *b*) is brief and passionate with the imperious aorists *ἐρεύνησον καὶ ἴδε*, 'search and see,' not the calm imperfect, as in chap. v. 39, *ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς*—'search continuously the Scriptures.' Here, if anywhere, it would be natural to omit the article. Even the object of the verbs 'search and see' is omitted.

(*b*) But by far the strongest justification for the view here taken—that by *προφήτης* (*v.* 52) is meant the Prophet predicted by Moses and referred to in *v.* 40 of this chapter—lies in the analogous usage of *χριστός* sometimes with the article and sometimes without.

As seen from this and other passages *ὁ χριστός* and *ὁ προφήτης* were equally in the mouths of men. That they should therefore have the same grammatical experience is reasonable to suppose. If therefore we substitute "Christ" for "prophet" in this passage, it will help to illustrate our contention. If we were to read, "Search and see that Christ ariseth not out of Galilee," it would be seen that there is no need of the definite article. But of this anarthrous use of *χριστός* there are abundant examples, especially in the Pauline Epistles. A few instances will suffice: *τέλος γὰρ νόμου χριστός*, Rom. x. 4 (note that *νόμου*, the Mosaic law, is also without the article). *ἀπέστειλέν με χριστός*, 1 Cor. i. 17 (*ὁ χριστός* being found a few verses before i. 13). *χριστὸς δὲ παραγεγόμενος ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν . . . εἰσῆλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια*, Heb. ix. 11, 12. *χριστός ἔπαθεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν*, 1 Pet. ii. 21.

It may also be taken into consideration that in the famous prophecy of Moses (Deut. xviii. 15-19) the Hebrew

נִבִּי and the *προφήτην* of the LXX. version are without the article. There is probably a mental reference to this determining passage in the words of the Pharisees, which makes their answer equivalent to a quotation.

A word may be added about the reading. R.V. rightly restores *ἐγείρεται*. The perfect *ἐγήγερται* which appears in some of the later codices was introduced under the impression that these words contained a reference to the past, and that the impossibility of our prophet arising out of Galilee could be inferred from that fact.

The interpretation proposed in this note vindicates the true reading. *ἐγείρεται* is used here precisely as *γεννᾶται* is used in Matt. ii. 4. Herod "inquired where the Christ should be born," R.V., i.e. where your books say He is born. A nearer and therefore a still more illustrative instance is found in the verse which gives the key to the words we are discussing (*supra* v. 41): *Μὴ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίος ὁ χριστὸς ἔρχεται*; "What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee?"

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