

“THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.”

A NOTE ON 1 PETER I. 11.

“THE sufferings of Christ”: this seems a somewhat forced and therefore doubtful rendering of the Greek τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα. It is left unaltered by the Revised Version, but the American Revisers (1901) suggest, in their margin at least, “unto,” and thereby draw attention to the peculiarity of the phrase. The commentators also seem for the most part to be satisfied with the rendering, and Dr. Hort is the only one, so far as I have observed, who discusses the use of the preposition, and offers what may be illustrations. He seeks to do justice to the preposition, first of all, in his translation, *scil.* “the sufferings destined for the Messiah.” Here we note two points. First, the admission that some attempt must be made to explain the use of εἰς and to account for its presence in place of the genitive. For the sense in which the ordinary reader takes the English words a simple genitive would have been not only sufficient, but, we should say, inevitable: we have only to turn to iv. 13 of this Epistle or to 1 Corinthians i. 5 to find the obvious Greek equivalent of “the sufferings of the Christ.” And Dr. Hort accordingly rules out this commonly accepted interpretation. “This cannot possibly mean the sufferings of Christ in our sense of the words, i.e. the sufferings which as a matter of history befell the historical Christ. It is intelligible only from the point of view of the prophets and their contemporaries, the sufferings destined for Messiah.” In support of the meaning which he would thus assign to εἰς Dr. Hort does not bring any illustration from the New Testament, but quotes several passages from early Christian literature. But none of these parallels proves on closer examination to be quite cogent. The three Greek phrases (from Ignatius and Barnabas) have this feature in common

among themselves and different from the phrase in Peter, that in all three the word which in construction precedes the preposition is a verb, and a verb of preaching or prophesying. With such it is not difficult to connect the idea of direction and so the preposition *εἰς*. No one of these would be patient of a rendering "destined for" or the like. And the cases from Tertullian (four in all) exactly correspond with these, the word in each instance being a verb and that some form of "predicare." In Peter, on the other hand, the notable thing and the thing which asks for explanation is the fact that the preposition follows not on a verb but on a substantive, and the substantive itself is one from which the idea of direction through the preposition to a person is rather conspicuously absent.

The immediate context seems at first sight to provide a useful if not a decisive parallel in the phrase in v. 10: *οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφητεύσαντες*. And to this Alford points as a sufficient justification of the rendering "destined for," although he gives as well a variant in our passage, *scil.* "sufferings regarding (spoken with reference to) Christ." And von Soden (*Handcommentar*) accepts the same explanation, though he gives no further parallels. And yet even here there is a want of exactness in the parallel; the use of the preposition after a word like *παθήματα* is hardly to be justified by its use after *χάριτος*, which so readily suggests the idea of conveyance or communication, and so invites the preposition *εἰς*.

Dr. Hort's second point to which I have alluded touches on the significance to be attached to the word "Christ" in this phrase. And herein seems to me to lie the clue to the true interpretation. By "Christ" the Apostle does not mean in this case to refer to historical Jesus of the Gospels, but to the anticipative portrait of the Deliverer to come which rose with more or less distinctness before the vision of the prophets and apocalyptists and bore the name of the

Messiah or the Christ. The objection which at once occurs, viz. that here there is no article before the proper name, has been met in advance by Dr. Hort. It is true that the anarthrous formula appears at first sight capable only of one reference, and that to Jesus, whether in the flesh or in His glory. But this is more than doubtful. "Many assume that the article is indispensable if the Messiah is meant. This, however, is an untenable assumption." The one case of such a use of *Χριστός* without the article which Dr. Hort quotes (Mark i. 34) rests on a reading which is doubly doubtful both as to the article and as to the whole phrase. But there is force in his remark that "in St. John we find *Μεσσίας* iv. 25 as well as *τὸν Μεσσίαν* i. 41, and there is no probability that *Χριστός* would in like manner be used by Jews speaking Greek as well as *ὁ Χριστός*. Indeed without this preliminary supposition the apostolic use of *Χριστός* without an article would be difficult to explain." And the Psalms of Solomon provide an interesting parallel (xvii. 32) *πάντες ἅγιοι καὶ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν Χριστὸς κυρίου*, regarding which Kittel's note should be consulted.

This anarthrous use of the name is discussed by Dr. Hort in connexion with the earlier phrase "the spirit of Christ"; and having come to the above conclusion he renders the whole: "searching for what or what manner of season the spirit of Messiah in them was disclosing, protesting beforehand of the sufferings destined for Messiah." (He takes no notice of the fact recorded by Alford that in the first instance the word *Χριστός* is wanting in Cod. Vaticanus.)

If this reasoning is so far correct, viz., that the rendering of *εἰς* by "destined for" after a word like *παθήματα* is difficult to parallel and in itself forced, and that the name *Χριστός* even without the article may be applied to the Messiah as he appeared still in the future to the vision of those who received the testimony of His Spirit,—the sugges-

tion which I have to make seems to lie ready to hand. It is that we should understand by this phrase "the sufferings which lead up to Messiah, or to Messiah's coming." In the first place, this gives a natural and unforced rendering to the preposition. In the second, it harmonises, if I mistake not, with the circle of ideas in which the writer's mind was moving. That leads us to inquire, Who were "the prophets" who sought and searched diligently into these questions? The commentators who touch on this point are content to refer to those prophets of the Old Testament in whose writings there are passages capable of a Messianic interpretation: and they find confirmation of this as the source of prophecies specially referring to "sufferings" in Luke xxiv. 26, 27. But this is to overlook the emphasis laid upon the *search* and also the special subject of search which is here insisted upon. This subject is the season or the character of the season to which the spirit of Messiah in them did point. It was the "times" of great events in the future for which they were searching; or, if that could not be ascertained, then "the general character of the attendant circumstances," not the events themselves. And it was on these points that the Spirit had given them indications concurrently with testimony as to τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα. Now, if we ask where are such "prophets" to be found, the answer is that such investigations and such communications begin indeed with Daniel (cf. ix. 24-27, etc.), but become abundant in the period which opens with Daniel, the literature of the Apocalypses. I may recall here the very attractive suggestion of Professor Rendel Harris, that the writer of this Epistle is just about to make direct allusion to one of the most famous of these. The phrase in the twelfth verse: "to whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto you did they minister these things" has no source or parallel which can be discovered in the Old Testament, whereas it finds a very

remarkable parallel in the opening of the Book of Enoch : " Not for the present generation did I ponder, but for the generation to come." It is true that in this particular book (in the original parts at least) the figure of the Messiah Himself does not make its appearance¹; but references to the Messianic Woes are not wanting, and in the Vision of the Ten Weeks there is precisely that attempt to forecast the time or the character of the time at which the end might be expected, to which allusion is here made. The Fourth Book of Esra furnishes similar parallels. The writer is markedly conscious of his own eagerness in seeking to understand " the ways of God " (iv. 2), even to the extent of " burrowing " in the search (xii. 4) : and he is specially anxious to be informed as to the time of the end. Thus (iv. 34) " I answered and said, How long yet? When shall it be? Our life is so short and wretched. But he answered and said: Wilt thou hasten faster than the Most High? Thou wouldest have haste for thine own sake, but the Most High for the sake of many."

It is hardly necessary, however, to illustrate the double point that the Apocalyptic literature as a whole is at once closely concerned with the " time " or period of the end and the " manner of time," the character of the period preceding the coming of the Messiah. One of the most striking features of that period as described in this literature is of course the *παθήματα*, and with almost equal fulness are enumerated the *δόξαι* which are to follow. The Book of Jubilees furnishes as good an illustration as any other. " For calamity follows on calamity, and wound on wound, and tribulation on tribulation, and evil tidings on evil tidings, and illness on illness, and all evil judgments such as these one with another, illness and overthrow, and snow and frost, and ice and fever and chills, and torpor and famine, and death and sword, and captivity and all kinds of calamities and pains." These

¹ Bousset, *Religion des Judenthums*, p. 209.

are the *παθήματα*, the *ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων* or "beginning of birth-pangs" (Matt. xxiv. 8), the travail out of which the new (Messianic) age is to be born. "The days of the children of men will begin to grow many, and increase from generation to generation, and day to day, till their days draw near to a thousand years, and to a greater number of years than (before) were their days. And there will be no old man, not one that is not satisfied with his days; for all will be (as) children and youths" (xxiii. 27; tr. Charles). These are some of the *δόξαι*. And the transition from the one to the other is either in the coming of Messiah or in the crisis which corresponds to it.

There appears, then, to be good reason to believe that the mind of the writer of this Epistle was moving in this circle of ideas, and that his allusion here is to these "prophets" and to their predictions of sufferings to come and of glory to follow. And it would be quite consistent with the Apocalyptic method if he gave to these former prophecies an interpretation suited to the new age. It was the Parousia or appearance of Christ "a second time unto salvation" of which he was thinking, and for him the "manifold trials" were the sufferings which were to lead up to the return of Christ.

I should like to suggest also that if this interpretation be correct, it may throw light on another difficult phrase in the Epistles, Paul's "I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ." None of the interpretations which are commonly offered seems entirely satisfactory. The governing idea in the sentence appears to be that of an ordained measure of suffering to the completion of which the Apostle is somehow contributing. That this refers to the sufferings of the historical Jesus is hardly possible, and not to be supported from Scripture. That it refers to the sufferings of Christ in or with His Church can hardly be the primary meaning, however true it might be as

a secondary and mystical interpretation. But if we could take τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ Χριστοῦ (the article being present encourages the suggestion) as equivalent to "the sufferings of Messiah" and that to "the Messianic woes," we should have a conception to which the category of measure could be applied, and indeed was applied in the Apocalyptic literature. It was when these woes were complete that, according to Jewish expectation, the Messiah would appear. And it would lie close to St. Paul's hand to place a similar interpretation upon the sufferings which he and others were called upon to undergo in the cause of Christ. The writer of the Apocalypse applies this standard of measure not to the sufferings, but to the sufferers themselves: "It was said unto them (the martyrs) that they should rest yet for a little time until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled.

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NOTE ON "THE CENSUS OF THE ISRAELITES."

IN connexion with the twelve tribes belonging to the Exodus census, without Levi being included, it should be observed that this bears strongly in favour of the early date of the blessings of Jacob (Gen. xlix.), where Levi is only inserted by being coupled with Simeon. This shows that the blessings are of a period before the census was misunderstood, when Levi was reckoned separately. And if the blessings are thus as early as the census lists of the Exodus, they may be taken back still earlier; for in the Exodus census Ephraim and Manasseh are separate, while in the blessings they are all one in Joseph. Thus the internal evidence points to the blessings being as early as the Egyptian sojourn.

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