

A MARTYR OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

THERE was found at Synnada of Phrygia in June, 1907, and sent to the Museum of Broussa, one of the most remarkable of the early Christian monuments that are now being slowly discovered, year after year, one here and one there, in Asia Minor (chiefly in Phrygia and Lycaonia). It is a small box of marble, about six inches long in its largest part (where the moulding projects most prominently); and it has the form of a tiny sarcophagus, differing only in being higher than its length, whereas sarcophagi generally are longer than they measure in height. I speak of the height including the lid or cover (which is a separate piece both in the large sarcophagi and in this small box). With the box, and apparently inside it, though the account is not quite clear and explicit on this detail, there were found fragments of a skull. On the body and on the lid of the sarcophagus are inscriptions.—

(1) On the body:—

ὠθε ἔνα Τρο-
φίμου τοῦ μ-
άρτυρος ὀστέ-
α

Within are Tro-
phimus the M-
artyr's bones

(2) On the lid—

τίς ἂν δὲ ταῦ-
τα τὰ ὀστέα
ἐκβαλῆ ποτέ,
ἔσται αὐτῷ
πρὸς τ[ὸν] θεό-
ν¹

And whosoever
shall these bones
ever cast out,
he shall have to
reckon with God.

Monsieur G. Mendel, who is the author of the excellent

¹ Grammatically the only difficulty lies in *ένα*, apparently a vulgarism for *ἐνεστι* or *ἐνι*, a relic of local Phrygian Greek.

Catalogue of the Museum at Broussa,¹ and Monsieur H. Grégoire, whose opinion he quotes, are agreed in regarding this box as having been intended to contain part of the remains of Trophimus from Pisidian Antioch, who suffered at Synnada in the short persecution under the Emperor Probus, 276–282 A.D. There are no two scholars whose opinion on a matter of Christian antiquities in Asia Minor ranks higher; and their agreement may be taken as very strong, though Monseigneur Duchesne regards the box and the inscriptions as later than the fourth century. MM. Mendel's and Grégoire's arguments are (as they both recognise) founded largely on the criteria of the dating of Christian inscriptions in Phrygia, which are laid down in my *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, ii., chapter xii. I have sometimes feared that my views might be considered to exaggerate the antiquity of Christian monuments in Phrygia; and it is a great encouragement to find that the same reasons which in 1894 appeared conclusive to me are still regarded by two such excellent scholars as decisive. The discoveries of the intervening sixteen years, have distinctly tended to confirm the main lines of my chronological system. In our view the formula "he shall have to reckon with God" belongs to the third century, when Christianity, in its public appearance, was still concealing itself under cryptic symbols and language. After the triumph of Christianity, in the epoch to which Mgr. Duchesne assigns this monument, one can hardly suppose it possible that no cross or other open sign of religious character should appear in the epitaph or on some other part of the box. The use of the cross in Christian epitaphs, or of some equivalent symbol, became almost universal soon after A.D. 340.²

¹ All that I say is taken from this publication.

² The usage had not been established when Bishop Eugenius of Laodicea of Lycania prepared his sarcophagus in A.D. 341 (Expositio, November, 1908).

The inscriptions, brief as they are, are marked not merely by the presence of an early formula, but by the absence of any late and stereotyped Christian expressions. At the date to which Mgr. Duchesne assigns the monument, we should expect a term like *τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος*. The public cult of the holy martyrs was fully established by that time, and an adjective of respect could hardly be omitted. In that later period this monument would naturally have to be regarded as a reliquary made to contain relics (supposed or real) of the Saint, and preserved in a Church for general reverence and worship. We can hardly suppose that a tomb, with a sepulchral inscription, was made for the bones of a person who had died a century and a half, or even more, previously. But this monument is marked as sepulchral. The form of the inscription cannot be mistaken. Had this been a reliquary, much greater horror would have been expressed at the thought of the bones being thrown out, and a severer punishment would have been denounced against sacrilege.

The small size of the box must be explained by the supposition that the Christians did not obtain the corpse from the Roman authorities. They only succeeded in getting a part which they buried. The words which I have used in the *Cities and Bishops of Phrygia*, ii., p. 730, "Rome did not war against the dead; and the remains of the martyrs were allowed to be buried by their friends"—while true of the case there mentioned and of many others—are too absolutely expressed; and exceptions must be admitted even in the earlier persecutions, still more in the later. The Roman officials observed the eagerness of the Christians to get possession of the corpses of the martyrs, or even parts of them, and probably dreaded some mystic or magical power which might be given by the relics of the dead: accordingly, as early as the martyr-

dom of Polycarp (probably A.D. 155) his body was refused to the Church. The high respect and veneration for the martyrs, which began quite early, passed gradually into a public cult, and gave rise to some abuses as early as the time of Diocletian.

Each new fact regarding the state of Christianity in Asia Minor during the third century has its distinct value ; and we are gradually collecting the materials out of which a clearer idea of the beginnings of the Eastern Church can be formed. Monsieur Grégoire accepts the early date assigned to Paul the Martyr of Derbe (whose tombstone was published by Miss Ramsay in *Studies in the History of the Eastern Provinces*, p. 62), remarking that a commonplace sepulchral formula, such as is employed in the epitaph, is not the sort of inscription that would have been placed over a martyr in the time following the triumph of the Church. He here recognises fully and confirms by his authority our principle that those simple forms of sepulchral inscription, common to pagans and Christians, or only slightly modified from pagan phraseology, belong to the period before Constantine, and disappear with the generation which was living at the time when the peace of the Church was finally assured.

The same scholar also accepts my interpretation of the epitaph of the five Phrygian " children, who on one single occasion gained the lot of life " : they are five martyrs, who suffered at Hieropolis, not far from Synnada, probably in the persecution of Decius 249-251 A.D., and were buried by their spiritual father, doubtless the Bishop of the Church. On the other hand he is not convinced by the conjecture advanced by Mr. Anderson and myself in the *Studies in the Eastern Provinces*, pp. 125, 201, that Bishop Akylas (Aquila), whose epitaph we have published, was a martyr. The language of the epitaph is obscure, and the text is

not complete.¹ But it is a gain to have assured three graves and epitaphs of martyrs during the third century.

A list of the recent books and articles bearing on the topics touched on in this article may be conveniently added here. The *Acta* of the martyrs Trophimus and his companions are published in *Acta Sanctorum*, September vi., pp. 12 ff., Migne's *Patrol. Gr.* cxv., pp. 733 ff. See also Harnack, *Gesch. d. altchr. Litt.* ii. 2, p. 481 note; Goerres, *Jahrb. f. protestant. Theol.* xvi., 1890, pp. 616 f. (who denies the authenticity of the *Acta*); Allard, *Hist. des Persecutions*, iii. p. 279, 4; and Aubé, *L'Église et l'État*, p. 52 f. (who both maintain the authenticity);² Mercati, *Studi et testi*, 5., *Note di letteratura biblica e cristiana antica*, xv. pp. 206-226; *Un apologia antiellenica sotto forma di martirio*. On the formula "he shall have to reckon with God," see *Monumenta ecclesia liturgica* by Cabrol and Leclerc, i., *reliq. liturg.*, section i., *reliq. epigraph.* p. 12*, no. 2798.

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¹ Monsieur Mendel also points out that the form of the letters in the epitaph of Trophimus the Martyr favours an early date, though not sufficient to prove the period absolutely.

² My impression has always been that the *Acta*, which are extremely interesting and well deserve a special publication, are of the fourth or fifth century, and probably quite trustworthy in the main outlines, but giving a later view of the situation.