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Notes from Dr. Hort's 'The Christian Ecclesia.'

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In addition to a masterly treatment of its main subject, this valuable book offers some most suggestive expository comments upon a large number of important passages in the New Testament, to which the author has occasion to refer in the course of his investigations. If anyone will take the index, and then refer back to the treatment of the different verses in the text of the book, he cannot fail to be struck with the wealth of new or improved light thrown upon the meaning of the many different words and sentences. As an example of what may be gleaned in this way, I propose to take five references, all chosen from the pastoral Epistles—

1. 1 Tim. i. 18 (pp. 181-184).—Dr. Hort here pleads for the rendering of the margin of the R.V.: 'The prophecies which led the way to thee, that in them (i.e. in their power) thou mayest war the good warfare,' as 'much the most natural rendering.' But he does not think the occasion referred to is that of 'the leaving behind at Ephesus.' For such an occasion the phrase would be a 'strong one.' He thinks the reference is rather to the call of Timothy during Paul's second missionary journey, a time when he believes the apostle was greatly in need of help. During that journey 'mysterious monitions, of the kind called prophetic,' came to him, which 'taught him the course to take by which he should at last find a Divinely-provided successor to Barnabas.' When Paul reached Derbe and Lystra (κατήγγειλαν, as of a 'goal'), 'the testimony which the young Timothy received from the brethren might well seem to be a human echo of a Divine choice already notified by prophecy.'

2. 1 Tim. iii. 1.—Dr. Hort here translates: 'If any man seeketh after ευαγγελιστής (a function of oversight) he desireth a good work. He, therefore, that hath oversight must need be free from reproach.' Together with this translation, we should remember Dr. Hort's translation of Acts xx. 28: 'In which the Holy Spirit set you to have oversight' (p. 99); and of Phil. i. 1: 'With them that have oversight and them that do service.' From these and other passages in which the word occurs, and especially when they are read in connection with Titus i. 6-7 (which Dr. Hort explains, p. 191), 'a man who is to be made an elder should be one who is ἀνέγκλητος, for (γὰρ) he that hath oversight must need be ἀνέγκλητος as a steward of God,' he argues that εὐαγγελιστής is not a title of office capable of being used convertiblely with προεξόθητος, but is rather the description of a function. On page 195, Dr. Hort
shows that 'we know singularly little about the actual functions,' except from the word 'oversight' and the phrase 'have charge (ἐπιμελήσεσαι) of an Ecclesia of God.'

3. 1 Tim. iii. 14 f.—These two verses Dr. Hort renders: 'These things I write to thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in a household of God, which is an Ecclesia of a living God, a pillar and stay of the truth.' In support and illustration of this rendering, Dr. Hort adduces the following reasons:—(a) The 'house of God' here spoken of is doubtless God's household. (β) Ἀναστρέφεσθαι: ἀναστροφῆ, includes all conduct and demeanour in converse with other men; here it is the converse of members of a household of which God is the Householder or Master. (γ) 'The force of the words that follow is only weakened and diluted by treating the absence of articles as immaterial'; here a living God 'implies a contrast with the true God made practically a dead deity by a lifeless and rigid form of religion.' (δ) 'There is no clear evidence that ἔθραίμασι ever means 'ground,' it is rather firmamentum, a 'stay' or 'bulwark.'

'St. Paul's idea is that each living society of Christian men is a pillar and stay of 'the truth,' as an object of belief and a guide of life for mankind, each such Christian society bearing its part in sustaining and supporting the one truth common to all.'

4. 1 Tim. v. 17–18.—Of these two verses we have not only a most suggestive rendering, but upon them Dr. Hort makes certain comments which may prove of deep value, from different points of view, to both ministers and laymen in every section of the Christian Church. The rendering is as follows:—'Let the elders that preside excellently be counted worthy of double honour, especially they that labour (κοπῶντες, work laboriously) in speech and teaching; for the Scripture saith, 'Thou shalt not muzzle an ox that treadeth out the corn,' and 'The labourer is worthy of his hire.''' Προσετῶντες, Dr. Hort says, implies 'more than ruling'—a function common to all the elders,—and those who discharged this 'presiding' excellently (καλῶς) are worthy of 'an honour exceeding that due to their office.' And 'special honour,' St. Paul adds, is due to those elders, coming under this description, who labour in speech and teaching. Dr. Hort does not think the language 'suggests two separate and well-defined classes—teaching elders and non-teaching elders, but that teaching was the most important form in which guidance and superintendence were exercised.'

5. 1 Tim. iv. 14.—'Neglect not the gracious gift (χάρισματος) which is in thee, which was given thee, through prophecy with laying on of the hands of the body of Elders (τῶν πρεσβύτευρον). And, 2 Tim. i. 6: 'For which cause I put thee in remembrance to wake into life (ἀναξιωτευόντα) the χάρισμα of God, which is in thee by the laying on of my hands; for God gave us (you Timothy and me Paul, us the heralds of His Gospel) not a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and of love and of chastened mind.' Dr. Hort devotes a whole lecture (x.) to the New Testament use of the words χάρις and χάρισμα, and then, again, in the next lecture (xi.) he dwells at some length on Timothy's χάρισμα. In lecture x. Dr. Hort notices that 'the associations connected with the term "grace," as inherited by us from Latin theology, denoting a spiritual power or influence, whether received by individuals according to their need, or appropriated permanently to a sacred ordinance or a sacred office, whatever may be the truth of the idea in itself, are only misleading in the interpretation of the biblical language respecting χάρις and χάρισμα.' Then, from 1 Tim. iv. 14, he concludes that the 'χάρισμα in Timothy' 'was a special gift of God, a special fitness bestowed by Him to enable Timothy to fulfil a distinctive function'—'preaching the Gospel to those who had not heard it.' Dr. Hort thinks that the context of 2 Tim. i. 6 'excludes the thought of a χάρισμα meant specially for Ephesian administration or teaching. . . . The antecedents of Timothy's χάρισμα lay in the atmosphere of unfeigned faith in which he had been bred up . . . and the waking of Timothy's χάρισμα into fresh life, now desired by St. Paul, was to show itself in a spirit which should animate Timothy's whole personal being.'

Possibly Dr. Hort's treatment of these words may seem less clear than some other parts of his work. But a careful study of lectures x. and xi., especially remembering these words, 'χάρισμα' . . . is used to designate either what we call "natural advantages," independent of any human process of acquisition, or advantages freshly received in the course of Providence; both alike
being regarded as so many various free gifts from the Lord of men, and as designed by Him to be distinctive qualifications for rendering distinctive services to men or to communities of men, will show that the apparent contradictions lie only on the surface, and that not only is the New Testament use of the words entirely consistent, but that it is opposed, as Dr. Hort contends, with the associations we have inherited from the Latin theology.

Contributions and Comments.

1. Belial and other Mythological Terms.

Professor Cheyne's identification of בִּלַי ה with the Babylonian goddess of the under-world, Be'lilu (so always, never Be'lili), will, in my judgment, have henceforth to be regarded as one of the best assured of Babylonian-Hebrew parallels. But I do not believe that בִּלַי ה is simply a Canaanite popular etymology; on the contrary, I regard the Babylonian Belilu as a loan-word borrowed from the West. That close relations subsisted between Babylonia and the West for centuries from about 2000 B.C. I have recently shown in detail in my book, Ancient Hebrew Tradition, and this circumstance leaves nothing strange in such borrowing by Babylonia of a word from Canaan.

The form בִּלַי ה certainly points, as Professor Cheyne rightly remarks, to the Babylonian conception of the 'land without return,' i.e. the under-world. Paul de Lagarde had already interpreted the word to mean, 'which allows not (no more) to come up.' A comparison had also been instituted between בִּלַי ה and the Arabic verb וַדָּלָ, 'to seek safety on a height.' Strange to say, everyone has quite overlooked a word which is far more to the point, the noun וַדָּ (for which we find also וַדָּ). There is an old Arabic expression, וַדָּ la-ka 'an-hu וַדָּ = 'Thou hast no way out of it' (i.e. thou canst not escape it). In my opinion, then, the Canaanites simply translated the Babylonian וַדָּ (which means 'land without return') into the same word (i.e. Sheol) by בִּלַי ה, 'land without exit,' and the Babylonians borrowed this Canaanite word again from the West as Belilu.

I have more than once shown 1 that with the Babylonians כְּלָן and כְּלָן are the two culminating points—כְּלָן the southern one under the earth, כְּלָן the northern one over our heads. As the latter presupposes a word כְּלָן, 'exit,' so does the former a word כְּלָן or כְּלָן, 'deep,' identical with כְּלָן (Sheol). An old by-form of כְּלָן must have been כְּלָן (from the cognate root אָסָד, Heb. נֵפֶשׁ, 'go out'), which I am inclined to regard as the prototype of the well-known Heb. כְּלָן (Zion). In Babylonia the couples—north and south, above and below, paradise and the under-world—always expressed parallel conceptions, but Zion must have had even in the earliest times a religious significance, that of a sanctuary on a mountain, the residence of כְּלָן כְּלָן (El Elyon), an earthly copy of the heavenly paradise. A similar rôle must have been played by כְּלָן (north). Compare Baal-zephon 2 of Ex. xiv. 2, and such biblical passages as Isa. xiv. 13 and Ezek. i. 4.

In like manner it was originally a mythical sense that was conveyed by בִּלַי ה, 'earth,' which is always used as a feminine without the article, and has thus the force of a proper name. In the religious texts (not the most ancient of these) of the Babylonians we meet sometimes with a goddess Tibal. In W. A. I. iv. 2nd ed. pl. 599, it is said that Latarak, Sharrakhu, Dun, Shamash, Tibal, Sakkut, and Kaivan can free (from the ban of sin). Further, the name occurs at the end of the list of stars (W. A. I. v. 46), and, finally, in the name of a measure (gish-tibal, variant gish-illus). K 4378, i. 24). Here also the question arises whether Tibal, who plays no rôle in Babylonian mythology, was not originally borrowed from Canaan instead of conversely.

1 First in the weekly publication, Ausland, 1892, p. 75, in my article, 'Die Astronomie der alten Chaldäer,' iii., in opposition to Jensen's Kosmologie, p. 13 f. At a later period כְּלָן and כְּלָן were used simply for north and south.


3 It looks as if here the word were even to be read Tibal-ti (thus fem. like the Heb. כְּלָן). It is preceded by the determinative for divinity.