

critical note on the passage : vol. II, pp. 138, 139, of the edition referred to above.

In verse 18, 'cords of vanity,' is represented by *σχοινία μακρῶς*. It was pointed out by Lowth that the Peshitta also has 'long'; and he suggested that for *מִשְׁרָא* the LXX read *שָׁרְרַת* (Lev. xxi 18, xxii 23, 'prolonged,' 'overgrown,' A.V. 'superfluous'). It is, however, possible that *μακρῶς* is a corruption of *ματάω*, the oblique strokes of the *α* having been misread with the upright of *τ* into *κ*. The rendering of *מִשְׁרָא* is vouched for by Exod. xx 7 *מִשְׁרָא*, *ἐπι ματαίῳ*; and in fact Symmachus renders the present passage *ὡς σχοινία ματαϊότητος*<sup>1</sup>.

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### THE PURPOSE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION.

THE attempts to explain the mystery of our Lord's Transfiguration have been innumerable. And many of these, no doubt, have been valuable contributions towards its solution. As a rule, however, they have dealt mainly with one side of the solemn occurrence. The question usually investigated has been, What did the Transfiguration mean for our Lord? what bearing had it on His earthly career? was it intended to be, in some marvellous way, a solace to Him in the dark hours when He began to go forward unflinchingly to the agony of the Cross? Many answers can be given to such questions as these. But they will always be, in the highest degree, provisional. It will ever lie beyond the bounds of our limited penetration to discover the hidden movements of the consciousness of Jesus. That falls within the scope of the unique fellowship between Him and His Father. But there is another side on which we can approach the Transfiguration. And it lies nearer to us, at least in the light of the New Testament. What was the meaning of the Transfiguration for the disciples? Obviously this was a scene intended to impress their minds. The three Synoptists detail the fact that Jesus took Peter, James and John apart to be witnesses of the extraordinary event. There was a purpose in His action. Had the Transfiguration been only an intensified condition of spiritual exaltation for our Lord, or an experience given to encourage and strengthen Him for the awful ordeal through which He had to pass, it would be by no means needful that the disciples should be spectators. Jesus had no partiality for spectacular demonstrations. He avoided them. Unless there was some important discipline for them

<sup>1</sup> [The Peshitta in Isaiah contains several instances of borrowing from the LXX, e. g. for *שָׁרְרַת* in xxx 7 Pesh. has *vain is this your confidence!*—a rendering very like *ματάω ἢ παράκλησις ἑμῶν αὐτῆ*.—EDD.]

involved in this amazing scene, we may be sure they would never have been there. And the accompaniments of the occurrence bear out the idea. There was a definite appeal made to their senses. It was what they saw—that primarily—which left an abiding impression. Their view of Jesus in the brightness of His altered semblance, their view of the figures who talked with Him, this, judging by the narrative, was the central point of the whole experience. At the same time, this was the element in the incident which startled them most. No face, no figure was so familiar to them as that of the Master. As they gazed upon His altered form and visage, *ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα* (Matt. xvii 6). The change in His appearance overawed them. The three Evangelists emphasize their terror. That was what they recalled most vividly. And yet there can have been nothing to create panic in their minds, for quickly they become reconciled to the change. St. Peter can say, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'

Can we suppose that this sight which fell upon their vision had no deeper meaning than the inspiring of awe in the presence of Jesus? Was it merely an additional assurance that He was in truth the Christ whom St. Peter had so lately confessed Him to be? One can scarcely imagine that this was necessary at the particular time. So sure were they that He was the Messiah that they refused to let their minds believe clearly in His announcement of approaching death. But the Cross was the burden of His thoughts during these weeks. And they could not understand the possibility of the Cross, far less the associated prediction of His Resurrection from the grave. How could He prepare their unwilling and dull minds for appreciating and intelligently confronting His death and resurrection? Necessarily He must use different methods in connexion with the different events. The fact of His death would be painfully plain to them. Some of their number would behold Him hanging lifeless on the Cross. What they required was an interpretation of this overwhelming disaster, as they must count it, the shattering of all their hopes. And this interpretation He gave them in the upper room at the institution of the Supper. That was the great lesson on His death, a lesson which they would take some time truly to apprehend. But the Resurrection stood in a different category. Death was familiar enough. Resurrection lay outside the bounds of their experience. It could only appeal to them, if they recognized their Lord as risen; if they were convinced that He whom they saw was the same Jesus whom they had followed in the days of His earthly ministry. But the Resurrection began a new epoch in the history of Jesus. It was the entrance to His exalted life. And the fact that He was glorified involved, from the New Testament point of view, changes in His whole being. For one thing, His outward semblance

was altered. He had now entered *eis tēn δόξαν αὐτοῦ* (Luke xxiv 26). The Evangelists show great reserve in dealing with the appearance of Jesus after His Resurrection. Evidently there was a remarkable transformation. St. Luke tells us that when Jesus came into the midst of a company of disciples gathered together in Jerusalem, *εἶδόν τε πνεῦμα θεωρεῖν*. St. Matthew notes that even among those to whom He showed Himself, *οἱ δὲ εἰδίστασαν* (Matt. xxviii 16). The later conclusion to St. Mark's Gospel, which must, in any case, be very early, states that He *ἐφανερώθη ἐν ἑτέρῳ μορφῇ*. St. Paul, doubtless as the consequence of his own meeting with the risen Jesus, spoke of *τὸ σῶμα τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ*. That was the kind of organism which awaited the Christian in his resurrection-life.

But was not this precisely the kind of manifestation which was made to the disciples in our Lord's Transfiguration? The terms used in the Synoptic narrative are most expressive. The word which sums up what actually happened is *μετεμορφώθη*. It reminds us vividly of the hints afforded by the Gospel records regarding His post-resurrection appearances. It recalls most strikingly the verb which St. Paul uses when describing the change which the power of Christ will effect in the bodies of believers, *ὅς μετασχηματίζει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν σύμφωνα τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ* (Phil. iii 21). The general effect of His appearance is designated as *δόξα*: *εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ* (Luke ix 31). Moses and Elijah, the heavenly visitants, are also spoken of as *ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ*. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark lay stress on the brightness which emanated from Him: *ἐλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς τὸ φῶς* (Matt. xvii 2); *τὸ ἴσως αὐτοῦ ἔγενετο σπλάζοντα λευκὰ λίαν* (Mark ix 3). And we know that *δόξα* was the term used in the Apostolic Age to denote the appearance, if we may so say, of the risen life, whether of Christ Himself or of His followers.

But further, it is very noteworthy that Jesus commanded His disciples to tell no one what they had seen 'until the Son of man be raised from the dead' (Matt. xvii 9). St. Mark also narrates this injunction (ix 9), but he has a remarkable addition, *οὐκ ἐν λόγῳ* (i.e. the command) *ἀποκρύπτει τὰς ἀποκάλυψεις ταύτας ἕως τοῦ ἔσχατου ἀποκάλυψαι* (rev. 10).

This seems to hint that in the early Church they somehow associated the Resurrection of Christ with the Transfiguration. But is there not a natural link binding them together? May not the Transfiguration have been intended, so far as its bearing on the disciples was concerned, as a lesson on the Resurrection? May it not have pointed forward to the nature and semblance of the risen life of the Lord? May not its purpose for the disciples have been to make it easier for them to recognize Him when they had loved and lost Him in whose grave their vast spiritual hopes had been extinguished?

For their conviction of His Resurrection and all that was involved in that depended on their recognition of the risen Lord when He appeared to them. They did recognize Him in spite of some mysterious transformation, which seems to have made it difficult. St. John was the first to discover Him on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. He had been a witness of that which had come to pass on the mountain side. It was he who could affirm with confidence, *ἑθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ* (John i 14).

Of course we feel that this can only be an hypothesis. And such hypotheses have to be put forth with great delicacy and caution in a region so obscure and transcendent as that which embraces the resurrection-life of our Lord. But if it does anything to suggest an aspect of the Transfiguration which is apt to be overlooked, it may not have been stated in vain.

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#### A POSSIBLE VIEW OF ROMANS x 13-21.

THE late Professor Jowett said of this passage, that in style it was one of the most obscure portions of the whole Epistle. He particularly referred to the fact that the argument was founded on passages from the Old Testament, without the relation of those passages to the argument being clearly brought out. This is true, but there is a further difficulty in the exact value to be assigned to verse 17.

- v. 13. 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be  
 v. 14. saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?  
 v. 15. and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!  
 v. 16. But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?  
 v. 17. So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.  
 v. 18. But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily,  
     Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.  
 v. 19. But I say, Did Israel not know? First Moses saith,  
     I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation,  
     With a nation void of understanding will I anger you.  
 v. 20. And Isaiah is very bold, and saith,  
     I was found of them that sought me not;  
     I became manifest unto them that asked not of me.